SURLY TIM

AND

OTHER STORIES

BY

FRANCES HODGSON BURNETT

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AND OTHER STORIES

BY

FRANCES HODGSON BURNETT

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AUTHOR'S NOTE.

IN this little volume have been brought together those of my short stories which have been thought most worthy of preservation in the present form. All these stories first appeared in Scribner's Monthly, except "Seth," which was published in Lippincott's Magazine.

The author begs to say to her readers, that "That Lass o' Lowrie's" and the present volume are the only works issued under her name which have been prepared and corrected for publication in book form under her personal supervision.

F. H. B.

September 14, 1877.

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"SURLY TIM."

A LANCASHIRE STORY.

"SORRY to hear my fellow-workmen speak so disparagin' o' me? Well, Mester, that's as it may be yo' know. Happen my fellow-workmen ha' made a bit o' a mistake — happen what seems loike crustiness to them beant so much crustiness as summat else — happen I mought do my bit o' complainin' too. Yo' munnot trust aw yo' hear, Mester; that's aw I can say."

I looked at the man's bent face quite curiously, and, judging from its rather heavy but still not unprepossessing outline, I could not really call it a bad face, or even a sulky one. And yet both managers and hands had given me a bad account of Tim Hibblethwaite. "Surly Tim," they called him, and each had something to say about his sullen disposition to silence, and his short answers. Not that he was accused of anything like misdemeanor, but he was "glum loike," the factory people said, and

"a surly fellow well deserving his name," as the master of his room had told me.

I had come to Lancashire to take the control of my father's spinning-factory a short time before, being anxious to do my best toward the hands, and, I often talked to one and another in a friendly way, so that I could the better understand their grievances and remedy them with justice to all parties concerned. So in conversing with men, women, and children, I gradually found out that Tim Hibblethwaite was in bad odor, and that he held himself doggedly aloof from all; and this was how, in the course of time, I came to speak to him about the matter, and the opening words of my story are the words of his answer. But they did not satisfy me by any means. I wanted to do the man justice myself, and see that justice was done to him by others; and then again when, after my curious look at him, he lifted his head from his work and drew the back of his hand across his warm face, I noticed that he gave his eyes a brush, and, glancing at him once more, I recognized the presence of a moisture in them.

In my anxiety to conceal that I had noticed anything unusual, I am afraid I spoke to him quite hurriedly. I was a young man then, and by no means as self-possessed as I ought to have been.

"I hope you won't misunderstand me, Hibblethwaite," I said; "I don't mean to complain — indeed, I have nothing to complain of, for Foxley

tells me you are the steadiest and most orderly hand he has under him; but the fact is, I should like to make friends with you all, and see that no one is treated badly. And somehow or other I found out that you were not disposed to feel friendly towards the rest, and I was sorry for it. But I suppose you have some reason of your own."

The man bent down over his work again, silent for a minute, to my discomfiture, but at last he spoke, almost huskily.

"Thank yo', Mester," he said; "yo're a koindly chap or yo' wouldn't ha' noticed. An' yo're not fur wrong either. I ha' reasons o' my own, tho' I'm loike to keep 'em to mysen most o' toimes. Th' fellows as throws their slurs on me would na understond 'em if I were loike to gab, which I never were. But happen th' toime 'll come when Surly Tim 'll tell his own tale, though I often think its loike it wunnot come till th' Day o' Judgment."

"I hope it will come before then," I said, cheerfully. "I hope the time is not far away when we shall all understand you, Hibblethwaite. I think it has been misunderstanding so far which has separated you from the rest, and it cannot last always, you know."

But he shook his head — not after a surly fashion, but, as I thought, a trifle sadly or heavily — so I did not ask any more questions, or try to force the subject upon him.

But I noticed him pretty closely as time went on, and the more I saw of him the more fully I was convinced that he was not so surly as people imagined. He never interfered with the most active of his enemies, nor made any reply when they taunted him, and more than once I saw him perform a silent, half-secret act of kindness. Once I caught him throwing half his dinner to a wretched little lad who had just come to the factory, and worked near him; and once again, as I was leaving the building on a rainy night, I came upon him on the stone steps at the door bending down with an almost pathetic clumsiness to pin the woolen shawl of a poor little mite, who, like so many others, worked with her shiftless father and mother to add to their weekly earnings. It was always the poorest and least cared for of the children whom he seemed to befriend, and very often I noticed that even when he was kindest, in his awkward man fashion, the little waifs were afraid of him, and showed their fear plainly.

The factory was situated on the outskirts of a thriving country town near Manchester, and at the end of the lane that led from it to the more thickly populated part there was a path crossing a field to the pretty church and church-yard, and this path was a short cut homeward for me. Being so pretty and quiet, the place had a sort of attraction for me, and I was in the habit of frequently passing through it on my way, partly because it was pretty

and quiet, perhaps, and partly, I have no doubt, because I was inclined to be weak and melancholy at the time, my health being broken down under hard study.

It so happened that in passing here one night, and glancing in among the graves and marble monuments as usual, I caught sight of a dark figure sitting upon a little mound under a tree and resting its head upon its hands, and in this sad-looking figure I recognized the muscular outline of my friend Surly Tim.

He did not see me at first, and I was almost inclined to think it best to leave him alone ; but as I half turned away he stirred with something like a faint moan, and then lifted his head and saw me standing in the bright, clear moonlight.

"Who's theer ?" he said. "Dost ta want owt ?"

"It is only Doncaster, Hibblethwaite," I returned, as I sprang over the low stone wall to join him. "What is the matter, old fellow ? I thought I heard you groan just now."

"Yo' mought ha' done, Mester," he answered heavily. "Happen tha did. I dunnot know mysen. Nowts th' matter though, as I knows on, on'y I'm a bit out o' soarts."

He turned his head aside slightly and began to pull at the blades of grass on the mound, and all at once I saw that his hand was trembling nervously.

It was almost three minutes before he spoke again.

"That un belongs to me," he said suddenly at last, pointing to a longer mound at his feet. "An' this little un," signifying with an indescribable gesture the small one upon which he sat.

"Poor fellow," I said, "I see now."

"A little lad o' mine," he said, slowly and tremulously. "A little lad o' mine an' — an' his mother.'

"What!" I exclaimed, "I never knew that you were a married man, Tim."

He dropped his head upon his hand again, still pulling nervously at the grass with the other.

"Th' law says I beant, Mester," he answered in a painful, strained fashion. "I conna tell mysen what God-a'-moighty 'ud say about it."

"I don't understand," I faltered; "you don't mean to say the poor girl never was your wife, Hibblethwaite."

"That's what th' law says," slowly; "I thowt different mysen, an' so did th' poor lass. That's what's the matter, Mester; that's th' trouble."

The other nervous hand went up to his bent face for a minute and hid it, but I did not speak. There was so much of strange grief in his simple movement that I felt words would be out of place. It was not my dogged, inexplicable "hand" who was sitting before me in the bright moonlight on the baby's grave; it was a man with a hidden history of some tragic sorrow long kept secret in his

homely breast, — perhaps a history very few of us could read aright. I would not question him, though I fancied he meant to explain himself. I knew that if he was willing to tell me the truth it was best that he should choose his own time for it, and so I let him alone.

And before I had waited very long he broke the silence himself, as I had thought he would.

. . . . . .

"It wur welly about six year ago I comn here," he said, "more or less, welly about six year. I wur a quiet chap then, Mester, an' had na many friends, but I had more than I ha' now. Happen I wur better nater'd, but just as loike I wur loighter-hearted — but that's nowt to do wi' it.

"I had na been here more than a week when theer comes a young woman to moind a loom i' th' next room to me, an' this young woman bein' pretty an' modest takes my fancy. She wur na loike th' rest o' the wenches — loud talkin' an' slattern i' her ways; she wur just quiet loike and nowt else. First time I seed her I says to mysen, 'Theer's a lass 'at's seed trouble;' an' somehow every toime I seed her afterward I says to mysen, 'Theer's a lass 'at's seed trouble.' It wur i' her eye — she had a soft loike brown eye, Mester — an' it wur i' her voice — her voice wur soft loike, too — I sometimes thowt it wur plain to be seed even i' her dress. If she'd been born a lady she'd ha' been one o' th' foine soart, an' as she'd been born a fac-

tory-lass she wur one o' th' foine soart still. So I took to watchin' her an' tryin' to mak' friends wi' her, but I never had much luck wi' her till one neet I was goin' home through th' snow, and I seed her afore fighten' th' drift wi' nowt but a thin shawl over her head; so I goes up behind her an' I says to her, steady and respecful, so as she wouldna be feart, I says:—

"'Lass, let me see thee home. It's bad weather fur thee to be out in by thysen. Tak' my coat an' wrop thee up in it, an' tak' hold o' my arm an' let me help thee along.'

"She looks up right straightforrad i' my face wi' her brown eyes, an' I tell yo' Mester, I wur glad I wur a honest man 'stead o' a rascal, fur them quiet eyes 'ud ha' fun me out afore I'd ha' done sayin' my say if I'd meant harm.

"'Thank yo' kindly Mester Hibblethwaite,' she says, 'but dunnot tak' off tha' coat fur me; I'm doin' pretty nicely. It is Mester Hibblethwaite, beant it?'

"'Aye, lass,' I answers, 'it's him. Mought I ax yo're name.'

"'Aye, to be sure,' said she. 'My name's Rosanna — 'Sanna Brent th' folk at th' mill allus ca's me. I work at th' loom i' th' next room to thine. I've seed thee often an' often.'

"So we walks home to her lodgins, an' on th' way we talks together friendly an' quiet loike, an' th' more we talks th' more I sees she's had trouble,

an' by an' by — bein' on'y common workin' folk, we're straightforrad to each other in our plain way — it comes out what her trouble has been.

"'Yo' p'raps wouldn't think I've been a married woman, Mester,' she says; 'but I ha', an' I wedded an' rued. I married a sojer when I wur a giddy young wench, four years ago, an' it wur th' worst thing as ever I did i' aw my days. He wur one o' yo're handsome, fastish chaps, an' he tired o' me as men o' his stripe allus do tire o' poor lasses, an' then he ill-treated me. He went to th' Crimea after we'n been wed a year, an' left me to shift fur mysen. An' I heard six month after he wur dead. He'd never writ back to me nor sent me no help, but I couldna think he wur dead till th' letter comn. He wur killed th' first month he wur out fightin' th' Rooshians. Poor fellow! Poor Phil! Th' Lord ha' mercy on him!'

"That wur how I found out about her trouble, an' somehow it seemed to draw me to her, an' mak' me feel kindly to'ards her; 'twur so pitiful to hear her talk about th' rascal, so sorrowful an' gentle, an' not gi' him a real hard word for a' he'd done. But that's allus th' way wi' women folk — th' more yo' harry's them, th' more they'll pity yo' an' pray for yo'. Why she wurna more than twenty-two then, an' she must ha' been nowt but a slip o' a lass when they wur wed.

"Hows'ever, Rosanna Brent an' me got to be good friends, an' we walked home together o'

nights, an' talked about our bits o' wage, an' our bits o' debt, an' th' way that wench 'ud keep me up i' spirits when I wur a bit down-hearted about owt, wur just a wonder. She wur so quiet an' steady, an' when she said owt she meant it, an' she never said too much or too little. Her brown eyes allus minded me o' my mother, though th' old woman deed when I were nobbut a little chap, but I never seed 'Sanna Brent smile th'out thinkin' o' how my mother looked when I wur kneelin' down sayin' my prayers after her. An' bein' as th' lass wur so dear to me, I made up my mind to ax her to be summat dearer. So once goin' home along wi' her, I takes hold o' her hand an' lifts it up an' kisses it gentle — as gentle an' wi' summat th' same feelin' as I'd kiss th' Good Book.

"'''Sanna,' I says, 'bein' as yo've had so much trouble wi' yo're first chance, would yo' be afeard to try a second? Could yo' trust a mon again? Such a mon as me, 'Sanna?'

"'I wouldna be feart to trust thee, Tim,' she answers back soft an' gentle after a manner. 'I wouldna be feart to trust thee any time.'

"I kisses her hand again, gentler still.

"'God bless thee, lass,' I says. 'Does that mean yes?'

"She crept up closer to me i' her sweet, quiet way.

"'Aye, lad,' she answers. 'It means yes, an' I'll bide by it.'

"'An' tha shalt never rue it, lass,' said I. 'Tha's gi'en thy life to me, an' I'll gi' mine to thee, sure and true.'

"So we wur axed i' th' church th' next Sunday, an' a month fro then we wur wed, an' if ever God's sun shone on a happy mon, it shone on one that day, when we come out o' church together — me and Rosanna — an' went to our bit o' a home to begin life again. I couldna tell thee, Mester — theer beant no words to tell how happy an' peaceful we lived fur two year after that. My lass never altered her sweet ways, an' I just loved her to make up to her fur what had gone by. I thanked God-a'-moighty fur his blessing every day, and every day I prayed to be made worthy of it. An' here's just wheer I'd like to ax a question, Mester, about summat 'ats worretted me a good deal. I dunnot want to question th' Maker, but I would loike to know how it is 'at sometime it seems 'at we're clean forgot — as if He couldna fash hissen about our troubles, an' most loike left 'em to work out their-sens. Yo' see, Mester, an' we aw see sometime He thinks on us an' gi's us a lift, but hasna tha thysen seen times when tha stopt short an' axed thysen, 'Wheer's God-a'-moighty 'at he isna straighten things out a bit? Th' world's i' a power o' a snarl. Th' righteous is forsaken, 'n his seed's beggin' bread. An' th' devil's topmost agen.' I've talked to my lass about it sometimes, an' I dunnot think I meant harm, Mester, for I felt humble enough —

an' when I talked, my lass she'd listen an' smile soft an' sorrowful, but she never gi' me but one answer.

"'Tim,' she'd say, 'this is on'y th' skoo' an' we're th' scholars, an' He's teachin' us his way. We munnot be loike th' children o' Israel i' th' Wilderness, an' turn away fro' th' cross 'cause o' th' Sarpent. We munnot say, "Theer's a snake:" we mun say, "Theer's th' Cross, an' th' Lord gi' it to us." Th' teacher wouldna be o' much use, Tim, if th' scholars knew as much as he did, an' I allus think it's th' best to comfort mysen wi' sayin', "Th' Lord-a'-moighty, He knows."'

"An' she allus comforted me too when I wur worretted. Life looked smooth somewhow them three year. Happen th' Lord sent 'em to me to make up fur what wur comin'.

"At th' eend o' th' first year th' child wur born, th' little lad here," touching the turf with his hand, "'Wee Wattie' his mother ca'd him, an' he wur a fine, lightsome little chap. He filled th' whole house wi' music day in an' day out, crowin' an' crowin' — an' cryin' too sometime. But if ever yo're a feyther, Mester, yo'll find out 'at a baby's cry's music often enough, an' yo'll find, too, if yo' ever lose one, 'at yo'd give all yo'd getten just to hear even th' worst o' cryin'. Rosanna she couldna find i' her heart to set th' little un out o' her arms a minnit, an' she'd go about th' room wi' her eyes aw leeted up, an' her face bloomin' like a slip o' a

girl's, an' if she laid him i' th' cradle her head 'ud be turnt o'er her shoulder aw th' time lookin' at him an' singin' bits o' sweet-soundin' foolish woman-folks' songs. I thowt then 'at them old nursery songs wur th' happiest music I ever heard, an' when 'Sanna sung 'em they minded me o' hymn-tunes.

"Well, Mester, before th' spring wur out Wee Wat was toddlin' round holdin' to his mother's gown, an' by th' middle o' th' next he was cooin' like a dove, an' prattlin' words i' a voice like hers. His eyes wur big an' brown an' straightforrad like hers, an' his mouth was like hers, an' his curls wur the color o' a brown bee's back. Happen we set too much store by him, or happen it wur on'y th' Teacher again teachin' us his way, but hows'ever that wur, I came home one sunny mornin' fro' th' factory, an' my dear lass met me at th' door, all white an' cold, but tryin' hard to be brave an' help me to bear what she had to tell.

"'Tim,' said she, 'th' Lord ha' sent us a trouble; but we can bear it together, conna we, dear lad?'

"That wur aw, but I knew what it meant, though th' poor little lamb had been well enough when I kissed him last.

"I went in an' saw him lyin' theer on his pillows strugglin' an' gaspin' in hard convulsions, an' I seed aw was over. An' in half an hour, just as th' sun crept across th' room an' touched his curls, th' pretty little chap opens his eyes aw at once.

"'Daddy!' he crows out. 'Sithee Dad—!' an' he lifts hissen up, catches at th' floatin' sunshine, laughs at it, and fa's back—dead, Mester.

"I've allus thowt 'at th' Lord-a'-moighty knew what He wur doin' when he gi' th' woman t' Adam i' th' Garden o' Eden. He knowed he wur nowt but a poor chap as couldna do fur hissen; an' I suppose that's th' reason he gi' th' woman th' strength to bear trouble when it comn. I'd ha' gi'en clean in if it hadna been fur my lass when th' little chap deed. I never tackledt owt i' aw my days 'at hurt me as heavy as losin' him did. I couldna abear th' sight o' his cradle, an' if ever I comn across any o' his bits o' playthings, I'd fa' to cryin' an' shakin' like a babby. I kept out o' th' way o' th' neebors' children even. I wasna like Rosanna. I couldna see quoite clear what th' Lord meant, an' I couldna help murmuring sad and heavy. That's just loike us men, Mester; just as if th' dear wench as had give him her life fur food day an' neet, hadna fur th' best reet o' th' two to be weak an' heavy-hearted.

"But I getten welly over it at last, an' we was beginnin' to come round a bit an' look forrard to th' toime we'd see him agen 'stead o' lookin' back to th' toime we shut th' round bit of a face under th' coffin-lid. Th' day comn when we could bear to talk about him an' moind things he'd said an' tried to say i' his broken babby way. An' so we wur creepin' back again to th' old happy quiet, an'

we had been for welly six month, when summat fresh come. I'll never forget it, Mester, th' neet it happened. I'd kissed Rosanna at th' door an' left her standin' theer when I went up to th' village to buy summat she wanted. It wur a bright moonlight neet, just such a neet as this, an' th' lass had followed me out to see th' moonshine, it wur so bright an' clear; an' just before I starts she folds both her hands on my shoulder an' says, soft an' thoughtful: —

"'Tim, I wonder if th' little chap sees us?'

"'I'd loike to know, dear lass,' I answers back. An' then she speaks again: —

"'Tim, I wonder if he'd know he was ours if he could see, or if he'd ha' forgot? He wur such a little fellow.'

"Them wur th' last peaceful words I ever heerd her speak. I went up to th' village an' getten what she sent me fur, an' then I comn back. Th' moon wur shinin' as bright as ever, an' th' flowers i' her slip o' a garden wur aw sparklin' wi' dew. I seed 'em as I went up th' walk, an' I thowt again of what she'd said bout th' little lad.

"She wasna outside, an' I couldna see a leet about th' house, but I heerd voices, so I walked straight in — into th' entry an' into th' kitchen, an' theer she wur, Mester — my poor wench, crouchin' down by th' table, hidin' her face i' her hands, an' close beside her wur a mon — a mon i' red sojer clothes.

"My heart leaped into my throat, an' fur a minnit I hadna a word, fur I saw summat wur up, though I couldna tell what it wur. But at last my voice come back.

"'Good evenin', Mester,' I says to him; 'I hope yo' ha'not broughten ill-news? What ails thee, dear lass?'

"She stirs a little, an' gives a moan like a dyin' child; and then she lifts up her wan, broken-hearted face, an' stretches out both her hands to me.

"'Tim,' she says, 'dunnot hate me, lad, dunnot. I thowt he wur dead long sin'. I thowt 'at th' Rooshans killed him an' I wur free, but I amna. I never wur. He never deed, Tim, an' theer he is — the mon as I wur wed to an' left by. God forgi' him, an' oh, God forgi' me!'

"Theer, Mester, theer's a story fur thee. What dost ta' think o't? My poor lass wasna my wife at aw — th' little chap's mother wasna his feyther's wife, an' never had been. That theer worthless fellow as beat an' starved her an' left her to fight th' world alone, had comn back alive an' well, ready to begin agen. He could tak' her away fro' me any hour i' th' day, and I couldna say a word to bar him. Th' law said my wife — th' little dead lad's mother — belonged to him, body an' soul. Theer was no law to help us — it wur aw on his side.

"Theer's no use o' goin' o'er aw we said to each

other i' that dark room theer. I raved an' prayed an' pled wi' th' lass to let me carry her across th' seas, wheer I'd heerd tell theer was help fur such loike; but she pled back i' her broken, patient way that it wouldna be reet, an' happen it wur the Lord's will. She didna say much to th' sojer. I scarce heerd her speak to him more than once, when she axed him to let her go away by hersen.

"'Tha conna want me now, Phil,' she said. 'Tha conna care fur me. Tha must know I'm more this mon's wife than thine. But I dunnot ax thee to gi' me to him because I know that wouldna be reet; I on'y ax thee to let me aloan. I'll go fur enough off an' never see him more.'

"But th' villain held to her. If she didna come wi' him, he said, he'd ha' her up before th' court fur bigamy. I could ha' done murder then, Mester, an' I would ha' done if it hadna been for th' poor lass runnin' in betwixt us an' pleadin' wi' aw her might. If we'n been rich foak theer might ha' been some help fur her, at least; th' law might ha' been browt to mak' him leave her be, but bein' poor workin' foak theer wur on'y one thing: th' wife mun go wi' th' husband, an' theer th' husband stood — a scoundrel, cursin', wi' his black heart on his tongue.

"'Well,' says th' lass at last, fair wearied out wi' grief, 'I'll go wi' thee, Phil, an' I'll do my best to please thee, but I wunnot promise to forget th'

mon as has been true to me, an' has stood betwixt me an' th' world.'

"Then she turned round to me.

"'Tim,' she said to me, as if she wur haaf feart — aye, feart o' him, an' me standin' by. Three hours afore, th' law ud ha' let me mill any mon 'at feart her. 'Tim,' she says, 'surely he wunnot refuse to let us go together to th' little lad's grave — fur th' last time.' She didna speak to him but to me, an' she spoke still an' strained as if she wur too heart-broke to be wild. Her face was as white as th' dead, but she didna cry, as ony other woman would ha' done. 'Come, Tim,' she said, 'he conna say no to that.'

"An' so out we went 'thout another word, an' left th' black-hearted rascal behind, sittin' i' th' very room th' little un deed in. His cradle stood theer i' th' corner. We went out into th' moonlight 'thout speakin', an' we didna say a word until we come to this very place, Mester.

"We stood here for a minute silent, an' then I sees her begin to shake, an' she throws hersen down on th' grass wi' her arms flung o'er th' grave, an' she cries out as if her death-wound had been give to her.

"'Little lad,' she says, 'little lad, dost ta see thy mother? Canst na tha hear her callin' thee? Little lad, get nigh to th' Throne an' plead!'

"I fell down beside o' th' poor crushed wench an' sobbed wi' her. I couldna comfort her, fur

wheer wur there any comfort for us? Theer wur none left — theer wur no hope. We was shamed an' broke down — our lives was lost. Th' past wur nowt — th' future wur worse. Oh, my poor lass, how hard she tried to pray — fur me, Mester — yes, fur me, as she lay theer wi' her arms round her dead babby's grave, an' her cheek on th' grass as grew o'er his breast. 'Lord God-a'-moighty, she says, 'help us — dunnot gi' us up — dunnot, dunnot. We conna do 'thowt thee now, if th' time ever wur when we could. Th' little chap mun be wi' thee, I moind th' bit o' comfort about getherin' th' lambs i' his bosom. An', Lord, if tha could spare him a minnit, send him down to us wi' a bit o' leet. Oh, Feyther! help th' poor lad here — help him. Let th' weight fa' on me, not on him. Just help th' poor lad to bear it. If ever I did owt as wur worthy i' thy sight, let that be my reward. Dear Lord-a'-moighty, I'd be willin' to gi' up a bit o' my own heavenly glory fur th' dear lad's sake.'

"Well, Mester, she lay theer on th' grass prayin' an cryin', wild but gentle, fur nigh haaf an hour, an' then it seemed 'at she got quoite loike, an' she got up. Happen th' Lord had hearkened an' sent th' child — happen He had, fur when she getten up her face looked to me aw white an' shinin' i' th' clear moonlight.

"'Sit down by me, dear lad,' she said, 'an' hold my hand a minnit.' I set down an' took hold of her hand, as she bid me.

"'Tim,' she said, 'this wur why th' little chap deed. Dost na tha see now 'at th' Lord knew best?'

"'Yes, lass,' I answers humble, an' lays my face on her hand, breakin' down again.

"'Hush, dear lad,' she whispers, 'we hannot time fur that. I want to talk to thee. Wilta listen?'

"'Yes, wife,' I says, an' I heerd her sob when I said it, but she catches hersen up again.

"'I want thee to mak' me a promise,' said she. 'I want thee to promise never to forget what peace we ha' had. I want thee to remember it allus, an' to moind him 'at's dead, an' let his little hond howd thee back fro' sin an' hard thowts. I'll pray fur thee neet an' day, Tim, an' tha shalt pray fur me, an' happen theer'll come a leet. But if theer dunnot, dear lad — an' I dunnot see how theer could — if theer dunnot, an' we never see each other agen, I want thee to mak' me a promise that if tha sees th' little chap first tha'lt moind him o' me, and watch out wi' him nigh th' gate, and I'll promise thee that if I see him first, I'll moind him o' thee an' watch out true an' constant.'

"I promised her, Mester, as yo' can guess, an' we kneeled down an' kissed th' grass, an' she took a bit o' th' sod to put i' her bosom. An' then we stood up an' looked at each other, an' at last she put her dear face on my breast an' kissed me, as she had done every neet sin' we were mon an' wife.

"'Good-bye, dear lad,' she whispers — her voice aw broken. 'Doant come back to th' house till I'm gone. Good-bye, dear, dear, lad, an' God bless thee.' An' she slipped out o' my arms an' wur gone in a moment awmost before I could cry out.

. . . . . .

"Theer isna much more to tell, Mester — th' eend's comin' now, an' happen it'll shorten off th' story, so 'at it seems suddent to thee. But it were na suddent to me. I lived alone here, an' worked, an' moinded my own business, an' answered no questions fur nigh about a year, hearin' nowt, an' seein' nowt, an' hopin' nowt, till one toime when th' daisies were blowin' on th' little grave here, theer come to me a letter fro' Manchester fro' one o' th' medical chaps i' th' hospital. It wur a short letter wi' prent on it, an' the moment I seed it I knowed summat wur up, an' I opened it tremblin'. Mester, theer wur a woman lyin' i' one o' th' wards dyin' o' some long-named heart-disease, an' she'd prayed 'em to send fur me, an' one o' th' young soft-hearted ones had writ me a line to let me know.

"I started aw'most afore I'd finished readin' th' letter, an' when I getten to th' place I fun just what I knowed I should. I fun her — my wife — th' blessed lass, an' if I'd been an hour later I would-na ha' seen her alive, fur she were nigh past knowin' me then.

"But I knelt down by th' bedside an' I plead wi'

her as she lay theer, until I browt her back to th' world again fur one moment. Her eyes flew wide open aw at onct, an' she seed me an' smiled, aw her dear face quiverin' i' death.

"'Dear lad,' she whispered, 'th' path was na so long after aw. Th' Lord knew — He trod it hissen' onct, yo' know. I knowed tha'd come — I prayed so. I've reached th' very eend now, Tim, an' I shall see th' little lad first. But I wunnot forget my promise — no. I'll look out — fur thee — fur thee — at th' gate.'

"An' her eyes shut slow an' quiet, an' I knowed she was dead.

"Theer, Mester Doncaster, theer it aw is, fur theer she lies under th' daisies cloost by her child, fur I browt her here an' buried her. Th' fellow as come betwixt us had tortured her fur a while an' then left her again, I fun out — an' she wur so afeard of doin' me some harm that she wouldna come nigh me. It wur heart disease as killed her, th' medical chaps said, but I knowed better — it wur heart-break. That's aw. Sometimes I think o'er it till I conna stand it any longer, an' I'm fain to come here an' lay my hand on th' grass, — an' sometimes I ha' queer dreams about her. I had one last neet. I thowt 'at she comn to me aw at onct just as she used to look, on'y, wi' her white face shinin' loike a star, an' she says, 'Tim, th' path isna so long after aw — tha's come nigh to th' eend, an' me an' th' little chap is waitin'. He knows thee, dear lad, fur I've towt him.'

"That's why I comn here to-neet, Mester; an' I believe that's why I've talked so free to thee. If I'm near th' eend I'd loike some one to know. I ha' meant no hurt when I seemed grum an' surly. It wurna ill-will, but a heavy heart."

. . . . . .

He stopped here, and his head drooped upon his hands again, and for a minute or so there was another dead silence. Such a story as this needed no comment. I could make none. It seemed to me that the poor fellow's sore heart could bear none. At length he rose from the turf and stood up, looking out over the graves into the soft light beyond with a strange, wistful sadness.

"Well, I mun go now," he said slowly. "Good-neet, Mester, good-neet, an' thank yo' fur listenin'."

"Good night," I returned, adding, in an impulse of pity that was almost a passion, "and God help you!"

"Thank yo' again, Mester!" he said, and then turned away; and as I sat pondering I watched his heavy drooping figure threading its way among the dark mounds and white marble, and under the shadowy trees, and out into the path beyond. I did not sleep well that night. The strained, heavy tones of the man's voice were in my ears, and the homely yet tragic story seemed to weave itself into all my thoughts, and keep me from rest. I could not get it out of my mind.

In consequence of this sleeplessness I was later

than usual in going down to the factory, and when I arrived at the gates I found an unusual bustle there. Something out of the ordinary routine had plainly occurred, for the whole place was in confusion. There was a crowd of hands grouped about one corner of the yard, and as I came in a man ran against me, and showed me a terribly pale face.

"I ax pardon, Mester Doncaster," he said in a wild hurry, "but theer's an accident happened. One o' th' weavers is hurt bad, an' I'm goin' fur th' doctor. Th' loom caught an' crushed him afore we could stop it."

For some reason or other my heart misgave me that very moment. I pushed forward to the group in the yard corner, and made my way through it.

A man was lying on a pile of coats in the middle of the by-standers, — a poor fellow crushed and torn and bruised, but lying quite quiet now, only for an occasional little moan, that was scarcely more than a quick gasp for breath. It was Surly Tim!

"He's nigh th' eend o' it now!" said one of the hands pityingly. "He's nigh th' last now, poor chap! What's that he's sayin', lads?"

For all at once some flickering sense seemed to have caught at one of the speaker's words, and the wounded man stirred, murmuring faintly — but not to the watchers. Ah, no! to something far, far beyond their feeble human sight — to something in the broad Without.

"Th' eend!" he said, "aye, this is th' eend, dear lass, an' th' path's aw shinin' or summat an — Why, lass, I can see thee plain, an' th' little chap too!"

Another flutter of the breath, one slight movement of the mangled hand, and I bent down closer to the poor fellow — closer, because my eyes were so dimmed that I could not see.

"Lads," I said aloud a few seconds later, "you can do no more for him. His pain is over!"

For with a sudden glow of light which shone upon the shortened path and the waiting figures of his child and its mother, Surly Tim's earthly trouble had ended.

"LE MONSIEUR DE LA PETITE DAME."

IT was Madame who first entered the box, and Madame was bright with youthful bloom, bright with jewels, and, moreover, a beauty. She was a little creature, with childishly large eyes, a low, white forehead, reddish-brown hair, and Greek nose and mouth.

"Clearly," remarked the old lady in the box opposite, "not a Frenchwoman. Her youth is too girlish, and she has too petulant an air of indifference."

This old lady in the box opposite was that venerable and somewhat severe aristocrat, Madame de Castro, and having gazed for a moment or so a little disapprovingly at the new arrival, she turned her glasses to the young beauty's companion and uttered an exclamation.

It was at Monsieur she was looking now. Monsieur had followed his wife closely, bearing her fan and bouquet and wrap, and had silently seated himself a little behind her and in the shadow.

"*Ciel!*" cried Madame de Castro, "what an ugly little man!"

It was not an unnatural exclamation. Fate had not been so kind to the individual referred to as she might have been — in fact she had been definitely cruel. He was small of figure, insignificant, dark, and wore a patient sphynx-like air of gravity. He did not seem to speak or move, simply sat in the shadow holding his wife's belongings, apparently almost entirely unnoticed by her.

"I don't know him at all," said Madame de Castro; "though that is not to be wondered at, since I have exiled myself long enough to forget and be forgotten by half Paris. What is his name?"

The gentleman at her side — a distinguished-looking old young man, with a sarcastic smile — began with the smile, and ended with a half laugh.

"They call him," he replied, "Le Monsieur de la petite Dame. His name is Villefort."

"Le Monsieur de la petite Dame," repeated Madame, testily. "That is a title of new Paris — the Paris of your Americans and English. It is villainously ill-bred."

M. Renard's laugh receded into the smile again, and the smile became of double significance.

"True," he acquiesced, "but it is also villainously apropos. Look for yourself."

Madame did so, and her next query, after she had dropped her glass again, was a sharp one.

"Who is she — the wife?"

"She is what you are pleased to call one of our Americans! You know the class," — with a little wave of the hand, — "rich, unconventional, comfortable people, who live well and dress well, and have an incomprehensibly *naïve* way of going to impossible places and doing impossible things by way of enjoyment. Our fair friend there, for instance, has probably been round the world upon several occasions, and is familiar with a number of places and objects of note fearful to contemplate. They came here as tourists, and became fascinated with European life. The most overwhelming punishment which could be inflicted upon that excellent woman, the mother, would be that she should be compelled to return to her New York, or Philadelphia, or Boston, whichsoever it may be."

"Humph!" commented Madame. "But you have not told me the name."

"Madame Villefort's? No, not yet. It was Trent — Mademoiselle Bertha Trent."

"She is not twenty yet," said Madame, in a queer, grumbling tone. "What did she marry that man for?"

"God knows," replied M. Renard, not too devoutly, "Paris does not."

For some reason best known to herself, Madame de Castro looked angry. She was a shrewd old person, with strong whims of her own, even at seventy. She quite glared at the pretty American from under her bushy eyebrows.

"Le Monsieur de la petite Dame!" she fumed. "I tell you it is low — *low* to give a man such names."

"Oh!" returned Renard, shrugging his shoulders, "we did not give it to him. It was an awkward servant who dubbed him so at first. She was new to her position, and forgot his name, and being asked who had arrived, stumbled upon this *bon mot: 'Un monsieur, Madame — le monsieur de la petite dame,'* — and, being repeated and tossed lightly from hand to hand, it has become at last an established witticism, albeit bandied under breath."

It was characteristic of the august De Castro that during the remainder of the evening's entertainment she should occupy herself more with her neighbors than with the opera. She aroused M. Renard to a secret ecstasy of mirth by the sharp steadiness of her observation of the inmates of the box opposite to them. She talked about them, too, in a tone not too well modulated, criticising the beautifully dressed little woman, her hair, her eyes, her Greek nose and mouth, and, more than all, her indifferent expression and her manner of leaning upon the edge of her box and staring at the stage as if she did not care for, and indeed scarcely saw, what was going on upon it.

"That is the way with your American beauties," she said. "They have no respect for things. Their people spoil them — their men especially.

They consider themselves privileged to act as their whims direct. They have not the gentle timidity of Frenchwomen. What French girl would have the *sang froid* to sit in one of the best boxes of the Nouvelle Opéra and regard, with an actual air of *ennui*, such a performance as this? She does not hear a word that is sung."

"And we — do we hear?" bantered M. Renard.

"*Pouf!*" cried Madame. "We! We are world-dried and weather-beaten. We have not a worm-eaten emotion between us. I am seventy, and you, who are thirty-five, are the elder of the two. Bah! At that girl's age I had the heart of a dove."

"But that is long ago," murmured M. Renard, as if to himself. It was quite human that he should slightly resent being classed with an unamiable grenadier of seventy.

"Yes!" with considerable asperity. "Fifty years!" Then, with harsh voice and withered face melted suddenly into softness quite *naïve*, "*Mon Dieu!*" she said, "Fifty years since Arsène whispered into my ear at my first opera, that he saw tears in my eyes!"

It was at this instant that there appeared in the Villefort box a new figure, — that of a dark, slight young man of graceful movements, — in fact, a young man of intensely striking appearance. M. Villefort rose to receive him with serious courtesy, but the pretty American was not so gracious. Not until he had seated himself at her side and spoken

to her did she turn her head and permit her eyes simply to rest upon his face.

M. Renard smiled again.

"Enter," he remarked in a low tone, — "enter M. Ralph Edmondstone, the cousin of Madame."

His companion asked no questions, but he proceeded, returning to his light and airy tone : —

"M. Ralph Edmondstone is a genius," he said. "He is an artist, he is a poet, he is also a writer of subtile prose. His sonnets to Euphrasie — in the day of Euphrasie — awakened the admiration of the sternest critics : they were so tender, so full of purest fire ! Some of the same critics also could scarcely choose between these and his songs to Aglæ in her day, or Camille in hers. He is a young man of fine fancies, and possesses the amiable quality of being invariably passionately in earnest. As he was serious in his sentiments yesterday, so he will be to-morrow, so he is to-day."

"To-day !" echoed Madame de Castro. "Nonsense !"

Madame Villefort did not seem to talk much. It was M. Ralph Edmondstone who conversed, and that, too, with so much of the charm of animation that it was pleasurable even to be a mere looker-on. One involuntarily strained one's ears to catch a sentence, — he was so eagerly absorbed, so full of rapid, gracefully unconscious and unconventional gesture.

"I wonder what he is saying ?" Madame de Castro was once betrayed into exclaiming.

"Something metaphysical, about a poem, or a passage of music, or a picture, — or perhaps his soul," returned M. Renard. "His soul is his strong point, — he pets it and wonders at it. He puts it through its paces. And yet, singularly enough, he is never ridiculous — only fanciful and *naïve*. It is his soul which so fascinates women."

Whether this last was true of other women or not, Madame Villefort scarcely appeared fascinated. As she listened, her eyes still rested upon his eager mobile face, but with a peculiar expression, — an expression of critical attention, and yet one which somehow detracted from her look of youth, as if she weighed his words as they fell from his lips and classified them, without any touch of the enthusiasm which stirred within himself.

Suddenly she rose from her seat and addressed her husband, who immediately rose also. Then she spoke to M. Edmondstone, and without more ado, the three left the box, — the young beauty, a little oddly, rather followed than accompanied by her companions, — at the recognition of which circumstance Madame de Castro uttered a series of sharp ejaculations of disapproval.

"Bah! Bah!" she cried. "She is too young for such airs! — as if she were Madame l'Impératrice herself! Take me to my carriage. I am tired also."

Crossing the pavement with M. Renard, they passed the carriage of the Villeforts. Before its

open door stood M. Villefort and Edmondstone, and the younger man, with bared head, bent forward speaking to his cousin.

"If I come to-morrow," he was saying, "you will be at home, Bertha?"

"Yes."

"Then, good-night," — holding out his hand, — "only I wish so that you would go to the Aylmers instead of home. That *protégée* of Mrs. Aylmer's — the little singing girl — would touch your heart with her voice. On hearing her, one thinks at once of some shy wild bird high in a clear sky, — far enough above earth to have forgotten to be timid."

"Yes," came quietly from the darkness within the carriage; "but I am too tired to care about voices just now. Good-night, Ralph!"

M. Renard's reply of "God knows, Paris does not," to Madame de Castro's query as to why Madame Villefort had married her husband, contained an element of truth, and yet there were numbers of Parisian-Americans, more especially the young, well-looking, and masculine, who at the time the marriage had taken place had been ready enough with sardonic explanations.

"There are women who are avaricious enough to sell their souls," they cried; "and the maternal Trent is one of them. The girl is only to blame for allowing herself to be bullied into the match."

"But the weak place in this argument," said M. Renard, "is, that the people are too rich to be

greatly influenced by money. If there had been a title, — but there was no title."

Neither did Bertha Trent comport herself like a cowed creature. She took her place in society as Madame Villefort in such a manner as could give rise to no comment whatever; only one or two of the restless inquisitive wondered if they had not been mistaken in her. She was, as I have said already, a childishly small and slight creature, — the kind of woman to touch one with suggestions of helplessness and lack of will; and yet, notwithstanding this, a celebrated artist — a shrewd, worldly-wise old fellow — who had painted her portrait, had complained that he was not satisfied with it because he had not done justice to "the obstinate endurance in her eye."

It was to her cousin, Ralph Edmondstone, he had said this with some degree of testiness, and Edmondstone had smiled and answered: —

"What! have you found that out? Few people do."

At the time of the marriage Edmondstone had been in Rome singeing his wings in the light of the eyes of a certain Marchesa who was his latest poetic passion. She was not his first fancy, nor would she be his last, but she had power enough for the time being to have satisfied the most exacting of women.

He was at his banker's when he heard the news spoken of as the latest item from American Paris,

and his start and exclamation of disgust drew forth some cynical after-comment from men who envied him.

"Who?" he said, with indiscreet impatience. "That undersized sphynx of a Villefort? Faugh!"

But insignificant though he might be, it was M. Villefort who had won, and if he was nothing more, he was at least a faithful attendant. Henceforth, those who saw his wife invariably saw him also, — driving with her in her carriage, riding with her courageously if ungracefully, standing or seated near her in the shadow of her box at the Nouvelle Opéra, silent, impassive, grave, noticeable only through the contrast he afforded to her girlish beauty and bloom.

"Always there!" commented a sharp American belle of mature years, "like an ugly little conscience."

Edmondstone's first meeting with his cousin after his return to Paris was accidental. He had rather put off visiting her, and one night, entering a crowded room, he found himself standing behind a girl's light figure and staring at an abundance of reddish-brown hair. When, almost immediately the pretty head to which this hair belonged turned with a slow, yet involuntary-looking movement toward him, he felt that he became excited without knowing why.

"Ah, Bertha!" he exclaimed.

She smiled a little and held out her hand, and he

immediately became conscious of M. Villefort being quite near and regarding him seriously.

It was the perverseness of fate that he should find in Bertha Villefort even more than he had once seen in Bertha Trent, and there had been a time when he had seen a great deal in Bertha Trent. In the Trent household he had been a great favorite. No social evening or family festivity had seemed complete without his presence. The very children had felt that they had a claim upon his good-humor, and his tendency to break forth into whimsical frolic. Good Mrs. Trent had been wont to scold him and gossip with him. He had read his sonnets and metaphysical articles to Bertha, and occasionally to the rest; in fact, his footing in the family was familiar and firmly established. But since her marriage Bertha had become a little incomprehensible, and on that account a little more interesting. He was sure she had developed, but could not make out in what direction. He found occasion to reproach her sometimes with the changes he found in her.

"There are times when I hardly know you," he would say, "you are so finely orthodox and well controlled. It was not so with you once, Bertha. Don't — don't become that terrible thing, a fine lady, and worse still, a fine lady who is *désillusionée*."

It baffled him that she never appeared much moved by his charges. Certainly she lived the

life of a "fine lady," — a brilliant life, a luxurious one, a life full of polite dissipation. Once, when in a tenderly fraternal mood, he reproached her with this also, she laughed at him frankly.

"It is absinthe," she said. "It is my absinthe at least, and who does not drink a little absinthe — of one kind or another?"

He was sincerely convinced that from this moment he understood and had the right to pity and watch over her. He went oftener to see her. In her presence he studied her closely, absent he brooded over her. He became impatiently intolerant of M. Villefort, and prone to condemn him, he scarcely knew for what.

"He has no dignity — no perception," was his mental decision. "He has not even the delicacy to love her, or he would have the tenderness to sacrifice his own feelings and leave her to herself. I could do it for a woman I loved."

But M. Villefort was always there, — gravely carrying the shawls, picking up handkerchiefs, and making himself useful.

"*Imbécile!*" muttered M. Renard under cover of his smile and his mustache, as he stood near his venerable patroness the first time she met the Villeforts.

"Blockhead!" stealthily ejaculated that amiable aristocrat. But though she looked grimly at M. Villefort, M. Renard was uncomfortably uncertain that it was he to whom she referred.

"Go and bring them to me," she commanded. "Go and bring them to me before some one else engages them. I want to talk to that girl."

It was astonishing how agreeable she made herself to her victims when she had fairly entrapped them. Bertha hesitated a little before accepting her offer of a seat at her side, but once seated she found herself oddly amused. When Madame de Castro chose to rake the embers of her seventy years, many a lively coal discovered itself among the ashes.

Seeing the two women together, Edmondstone shuddered in fastidious protest.

"How could you laugh at that detestable old woman?" he exclaimed on encountering Bertha later in the evening. "I wonder that M. Villefort would permit her to talk to you. She is a wicked, cynical creature, who has the hardihood to laugh at her sins instead of repenting of them."

"Perhaps that is the reason she is so amusing," said Bertha.

Edmondstone answered her with gentle mournfulness.

"What!" he said. "Have you begun to say such things? You too, Bertha"—

The laugh with which she stopped him was both light and hard.

"Where is M. Villefort?" she asked. "I have actually not seen him for fifteen minutes. Is it possible that Madame de Castro has fascinated him into forgetting me?"

Edmondstone went to his hotel that night in a melancholy mood. He even lay awake to think what a dreary mistake his cousin's marriage was. She had been such a tender and easily swayed little soul as a girl, and now it really seemed as if she was hardening into a woman of the world. In the old times he had been wont to try his sonnets upon Bertha as a musician tries his chords upon his most delicate instrument. Even now he remembered certain fine, sensitive expressions of hers which had thrilled him beyond measure.

"How could she marry such a fellow as that — how could she?" he groaned. "What does it mean? It must mean something."

He was pale and heavy-eyed when he wandered round to the Villeforts' the following morning. M. Villefort was sitting with Bertha and reading aloud. He stopped to receive their visitor punctiliously and inquire after his health.

"M. Edmondstone cannot have slept well," he remarked.

"I did not sleep at all," Edmondstone answered, "and naturally have a headache."

Bertha pointed to a wide lounge of the *pouf* order.

"Then go to sleep now," she said; "M. Villefort will read. When I have a headache he often reads me to sleep, and I am always better on awaking."

Involuntarily Edmondstone half frowned. Ab-

surdly enough, he resented in secret this amiability on the part of M. Villefort toward his own wife. He was quite prepared to be severe upon the reading, but was surprised to be compelled to acknowledge that M. Villefort read wondrously well, and positively with hints of delicate perception. His voice was full and yet subtly flexible. Edmondstone tried to protest against this also, but uselessly. Finally he was soothed, and from being fretfully wide-awake suddenly passed into sleep as Bertha had commanded. How long his slumber lasted he could not have told. All at once he found himself aroused and wide-awake as ever. His headache had departed; his every sense seemed to have gained keenness. M. Villefort's voice had ceased, and for a few seconds utter, dead silence reigned. Then he heard the fire crackling, and shortly afterward a strange, startling sound — a sharp, gasping sob!

The pang which seized upon him was strong indeed. In one moment he seemed to learn a thousand things by intuition — to comprehend her, himself, the past. Before he moved he knew that Villefort was not in the room, and he had caught a side glimpse of the pretty blue of Bertha's dress.

But he had not imagined the face he saw when he turned his head to look at her. She sat in a rigid attitude, leaning against the high cushioned back of her chair, her hands clasped above her head. She stared at the fire with eyes wide and

strained with the agony of tears unshed, and amid the rush of all other emotions he was peculiarly conscious of being touched by the minor one of his recognition of her look of extreme youth — the look which had been wont to touch people in the girl, Bertha Trent. He had meant to speak clearly, but his voice was only a loud whisper when he sprang up, uttering her name.

"Bertha! Bertha! Bertha!" as he flung himself upon his knees at her side.

Her answer was an actual cry, and yet it reached no higher pitch than his own intense whisper.

"I thought you were asleep?"

Her hands fell and he caught them. His sad impassioned face bowed itself upon her palms.

"I am awake, Bertha," he groaned. "I am awake — at last."

She regarded him with a piteous, pitying glance. She knew him with a keener, sadder knowledge than he would ever comprehend; but she did not under-estimate the depth of his misery at this one overwhelming moment. He was awake indeed and saw what he had lost.

"If you could but have borne with me a little longer," he said. "If I had only not been so shallow and so blind. If you could but have borne with me a little longer!"

"If I could but have borne with myself a little longer," she answered. "If I could but have borne a little longer with my poor, base pride!

Because I suffered myself, I have made another suffer too."

He knew she spoke of M. Villefort, and the thought jarred upon him.

"He does not suffer," he said. "He is not of the fibre to feel pain."

And he wondered why she shrank from him a little, and answered with a sad bitterness: —

"Are you sure? You did not know that I" —

"Forgive me," he said brokenly, the face he lifted, haggard with his unhappiness. "Forgive me, for I have lost so much."

She wasted few words and no tears. The force and suddenness of his emotion and her own had overborne her into this strange unmeant confession; but her mood was unlike his, — it was merely receptive. She listened to his unavailing regrets, but told him little of her own past.

"It does not matter," she said drearily. "It is all over. Let it rest. The pain of to-day and to-morrow is enough for us. We have borne yesterday; why should we want it back again?"

And when they parted she said only one thing of the future: —

"There is no need that we should talk. There is nothing for us beyond this point. We can only go back. We must try to forget — and be satisfied with our absinthe."

Instead of returning to his hotel, Edmondstone found his way to the Champs Élysées, and finally

to the Bois. He was too wretched to have any purpose in his wanderings. He walked rapidly, looking straight before him and seeing nobody. He scarcely understood his own fierce emotions. Hitherto his fancies had brought him a vague rapture; now he experienced absolute anguish. Every past experience had become trivial. What happiness is so keen as one's briefest pain? As he walked he lived again the days he had thrown away. He remembered a thousand old, yet new, phases of Bertha's girlhood. He thought of times when she had touched or irritated or pleased him. When he had left Paris for Rome she had not bidden him good-by. Jenny, her younger sister, had told him that she was not well.

"If I had seen her then," he cried inwardly, "I might have read her heart — and my own."

M. Renard, riding a very tall horse in the Bois, passed him and raised his eyebrows at the sight of his pallor and his fagged yet excited look.

"There will be a new sonnet," he said to himself. "A sonnet to Despair, or Melancholy, or Loss."

Afterward, when society became a little restive and eager, M. Renard looked on with sardonic interest.

"That happy man, M. Villefort," he said to Madame de Castro, "is a good soul — a good soul. He has no small jealous follies," and his smile was scarcely a pleasant thing to see.

"There is nothing for us beyond this past," Bertha had said, and Edmondstone had agreed with her hopelessly.

But he could not quite break away. Sometimes for a week the Villeforts missed him, and then again they saw him every day. He spent his mornings with them, joined them in their drives, at their opera-box, or at the entertainments of their friends. He also fell into his old place in the Trent household, and listened with a vague effort at interest to Mrs. Trent's maternal gossip about the boys' college expenses, Bertha's household, and Jenny's approaching social *début*. He was continually full of a feverish longing to hear of Bertha, — to hear her name spoken, her ingoings and outcomings discussed, her looks, her belongings.

"The fact is," said Mrs. Trent, as the winter advanced, "I am anxious about Bertha. She does not look strong. I don't know why I have not seen it before, but all at once I found out yesterday that she is really thin. She was always slight and even a little fragile, but now she is actually thin. One can see the little bones in her wrists and fingers. Her rings and her bracelets slip about quite loosely."

"And talking of being thin, mother," cried Jenny, who was a frank, bright sixteen-year-old, "look at cousin Ralph himself. He has little hollows in his cheeks, and his eyes are as much too big as Bertha's. Is the sword wearing out the scabbard,

Ralph? That is what they always say about geniuses, you know."

"Ralph has not looked well for some time," said Mrs. Trent. "As for Bertha, I think I shall scold her a little, and M. Villefort too. She has been living too exciting a life. She is out continually. She must stay at home more and rest. It is rest she needs."

"If you tell Arthur that Bertha looks ill" — began Jenny.

Edmondstone turned toward her sharply. "Arthur!" he repeated. "Who is Arthur?"

Mrs. Trent answered with a comfortable laugh.

"It is M. Villefort's name," she said, "though none of us call him Arthur but Jenny. Jenny and he are great friends."

"I like him better than any one else," said Jenny stoutly. "And I wish to set a good example to Bertha, who never calls him anything but M. Villefort, which is absurd. Just as if they had been introduced to each other about a week ago."

"I always hear him address her as Madame Villefort," reflected Edmondstone, somewhat gloomily.

"Oh yes!" answered Jenny, "that is his French way of studying her fancies. He would consider it taking an unpardonable liberty to call her 'Bertha,' since she only favors him with 'M. Villefort.' I said to him only the other day, 'Arthur, you are the oddest couple! You're so grand and well-behaved, I cannot imagine you scolding Bertha a little,

and I have never seen you kiss her since you were married.' I was half frightened after I had said it. He started as if he had been shot, and turned as pale as death. I really felt as if I had done something frightfully improper."

"The French are so different from the Americans," said Mrs. Trent, "particularly those of M. Villefort's class. They are beautifully punctilious, but I don't call it quite comfortable, you know."

Her mother was not the only person who noticed a change in Bertha Villefort. Before long it was a change so marked that all who saw her observed it. She had become painfully frail and slight. Her face looked too finely cut, her eyes had shadowy hollows under them, and were always bright with a feverish excitement.

"What is the matter with your wife?" demanded Madame de Castro of M. Villefort. Since their first meeting she had never loosened her hold upon the husband and wife, and had particularly cultivated Bertha.

There was no change in the expression of M. Villefort, but he was strangely pallid as he made his reply.

"It is impossible for me to explain, Madame."

"She is absolutely attenuated," cried Madame. "She is like a spirit. Take her to the country — to Normandy — to the sea — somewhere! She will die if there is not a change. At twenty, one should be as plump as a young capon."

A few days after this, Jenny Trent ran in upon Bertha as she lay upon a lounge, holding an open book, but with closed eyes. She had come to spend the morning, she announced. She wanted to talk — about people, about her dress, about her first ball which was to come off shortly.

"And Arthur says" — she began.

Bertha turned her head almost as Edmondstone had done.

"Arthur!" she repeated.

For the second time Jenny felt a little embarrassed. "I mean M. Villefort," she said, hesitantly.

She quite forgot what she had been going to say, and for a moment or so regarded the fire quite gravely. But naturally this could not last long. She soon began to talk again, and it was not many minutes before she found M. Villefort in her path once more.

"I never thought I could like a Frenchman so much," she said, in all enthusiastic good faith. "At first, you know," with an apologetic half laugh, "I wondered why you had not taken an American instead, when there were so many to choose from, but now I understand it. What beautiful tender things he can say, Bertha, and yet not seem in the least sentimental. Everything comes so simply right from the bottom of his heart. Just think what he said to me yesterday when he brought me those flowers. He helps me with mine, and it is

odd how things will cheer up and grow for him. I said to him, 'Arthur, how is it that no flower ever fails you?' and he answered in the gentlest quiet way, 'Perhaps because I never fail them. Flowers are like people, — one must love and be true to them, not only to-day and to-morrow, but every day — every hour — always.' And he says such things so often. That is why I am so fond of him."

As she received no reply, she turned toward the lounge. Bertha lay upon it motionless and silent, — only a large tear trembled on her cheek. Jenny sprung up, shocked and checked, and went to her.

"Oh, Bertha!" she cried, "how thoughtless I am to tire you so, you poor little soul! Is it true that you are so weak as all that? I heard mamma and Arthur talking about it, but I scarcely believed it. They said you must go to Normandy and be nursed."

"I don't want to go to Normandy," said Bertha. "I — I am too tired. I only want to lie still and rest. I have been out too much."

Her voice, however, was so softly weak that in the most natural manner Jenny was subdued into shedding a few tears also, and kissed her fervently.

"Oh, Bertha!" she said, "you must do anything — anything that will make you well — if it is only for Arthur's sake. He loves you so — so terribly."

Whereupon Bertha laughed a little hysterically.

"Does he," she said, "love me so 'terribly?' Poor M. Villefort?"

She did not go to Normandy, however, and still went into society, though not as much as had been her habit. When she spent her evenings at home, some of her own family generally spent them with her, and M. Villefort or Edmondstone read aloud or talked.

In fact, Edmondstone came oftener than ever. His anxiety and unhappiness grew upon him, and made him moody, irritable, and morbid.

One night, when M. Villefort had left them alone together for a short time, he sprang from his chair and came to her couch, shaken with suppressed emotion.

"That man is killing you!" he exclaimed. "You are dying by inches! I cannot bear it!"

"It is not he who is killing me," she answered; and then M. Villefort returned to the room with the book he had been in search of.

In this case Edmondstone's passion took new phases. He wrote no sonnets. painted no pictures. He neglected his work, and spent his idle hours in rambling here and there in a gloomy, unsociable fashion.

"He looks," said M. Renard, "as if his soul had been playing him some evil trick."

He had at first complained that Bertha had taken a capricious fancy to Madame de Castro, but in course of time he found his way to the old woman's *salon* too, though it must be confessed that Madame herself never showed him any great

favor. But this he did not care for. He only cared to sit in the same room with Bertha, and watch her every movement with a miserable tenderness.

One night, after regarding him cynically for some time, Madame broke out to Bertha with small ceremony: —

"What a fool that young man is!" she exclaimed. "He sits and fairly devours you with his eyes. It is bad taste to show such an insane passion for a married woman."

It seemed as if Bertha lost at once her breath and every drop of blood in her body, for she had neither breath nor color when she turned and looked Madame de Càstro in the face.

"Madame," she said, "if you repeat that to me, you will never see me again — never!"

Upon which Madame snapped her up with some anger at being so rebuked for her frankness.

"Then it is worse than I thought," she said.

It was weeks before she saw her young friend again. Indeed, it required some clever diplomacy to heal the breach made, and even in her most amusing and affectionate moods, she often felt afterward that she was treated with a reserve which held her at arm's length.

By the time the horse-chestnuts bloomed pink and white on the Avenue des Champs Élysées, there were few people in the Trent and Villefort circles who had not their opinions on the subject of Madame Villefort and her cousin.

There was a mixture of French and American gossip and comment, frank satire, or secret remark. But to her credit be it spoken, Madame de Castro held grim silence, and checked a rumor occasionally with such amiable ferocity as was not without its good effect.

The pink and white blossoms were already beginning to strew themselves at the feet of the pedestrians, when one morning M. Villefort presented himself to Madame, and discovered her sitting alone in the strangest of moods.

"I thought I might have the pleasure of driving home with Madame Villefort. My servant informed me that I should find her here."

Madame de Castro pointed to a chair.

"Sit down," she commanded.

M. Villefort obeyed her in some secret but well-concealed amazement. He saw that she was under the influence of some unusual excitement. Her false front was pushed fantastically away, her rouge and powder were rubbed off in patches, her face looked set and hard. Her first words were abominably blunt.

"M. Villefort," she said, "do you know what your acquaintances call you?"

A deep red rose slowly to his face, but he did not answer.

"Do you know that you are designated by them by an absurd title — that they call you in ridicule 'Le Monsieur de la petite Dame?' Do you know that?"

His look was incomprehensible, but he bowed gravely.

"Madame," he answered, "since others have heard the title so often, it is but natural that I myself should have heard it more than once."

She regarded him in angry amazement. She was even roused to rapping upon the floor with her gold-headed cane.

"Does it not affect you?" she cried. "Does it not move you to indignation?"

"That, Madame," he replied, "can only be my affair. My friends will allow me my emotions at least."

Then she left her chair and began to walk up and down, striking the carpet hard with her cane at every step.

"You are a strange man," she remarked.

Suddenly, however, when just on the point of starting upon a fresh tour, she wheeled about and addressed him sharply.

"I respect you," she said; "and because I respect you, I will do you a good turn."

She made no pretense at endeavoring to soften the blow she was about to bestow. She drew forth from her dress a letter, the mere sight of which seemed to goad her to a mysterious excitement.

"See," she cried; "it was M. Ralph Edmondstone who wrote this, — it was to Madame Villefort it was written. It means ruin and dishonor. I offer it to you to read."

M. Villefort rose and laid his hand upon his chair to steady himself.

"Madame," he answered, "I will not touch it."

She struck herself upon her withered breast.

"Behold me!" she said. "*Me!* I am seventy years old! Good God! seventy! I am a bad old woman, and it is said I do not repent of my sins. I, too, have been a beautiful young girl. I, too, had my first lover. I, too, married a man who had not won my heart. It does not matter that the husband was worthy and the lover was not, — one learns that too late. My fate was what your wife's will be if you will not sacrifice your pride and save her."

"Pride!" he echoed in a bitter, hollow voice. "My pride, Madame!"

She went on without noticing him: —

"They have been here this morning — both of them. He followed her, as he always does. He had a desperate look which warned me. Afterward I found the note upon the floor. Now will you read it?"

"Good God!" he cried, as he fell into his chair again, his brow sinking into his hands.

"I have read it," said Madame, with a tragic gesture, "and I choose to place one stumbling-block in the path that would lead her to an old age like mine. I do not like your Americans; but I have sometimes seen in her girl's face a proud, heroic endurance of the misery she has brought

upon herself, and it has moved me. And this letter — you should read it, to see how such a man can plead. It is a passionate cry of despair — it is a poem in itself. I, myself, read it with sobs in my throat and tears in my eyes. 'If you love me! — if you have ever loved me!' he cries, 'for God's sake! — for love's sake! — if there is love on earth — if there is a God in heaven, you will not let me implore you in vain!' And his prayer is that she will leave Paris with him to-night — to-night! There! Monsieur, I have done. Behold the letter! Take it or leave it, as you please." And she flung it upon the floor at his feet.

She paused a moment, wondering what he would do.

He bent down and picked the letter up.

"I will take it," he said.

All at once he had become calm, and when he rose and uttered his last words to her, there was upon his face a faint smile.

"I, too," he said, — "I, too, Madame, suffer from a mad and hopeless passion, and thus can comprehend the bitterness of M. Edmondstone's pangs. I, too, would implore in the name of love and God, — if I might, but I may not." And so he took his departure.

Until evening Bertha did not see him. The afternoon she spent alone and in writing letters, and having completed and sealed the last, she went

to her couch and tried to sleep. One entering the room, as she lay upon the violet cushions, her hands at her sides, her eyes closed, might well have been shocked. Her spotless pallor, the fine sharpness of her face, the shadows under her eyes, her motionlessness, would have excused the momentary feeling. But she was up and dressed for dinner when M. Villefort presented himself. Spring though it was, she was attired in a high, close dress of black velvet, and he found her almost cowering over the open fire-place. Strangely enough, too, she fancied that when she looked up at him she saw him shiver, as if he were struck with a slight chill also.

"You should not wear that," he said, with a half smile at her gown.

"Why?" she asked.

"It makes you so white — so much like a too early lily. But — but perhaps you thought of going out?"

"No," she answered; "not to-night."

He came quite close to her.

"If you are not too greatly fatigued," he said, "it would give me happiness to take you with me on my errand to your mother's house. I must carry there my little birthday gift to your sister," smiling again.

An expression of embarrassment showed itself upon her face.

"Oh," she exclaimed, "to think that I had for-

gotten it! She will feel as if I did not care for her at all."

She seemed for the moment quite unhappy.

"Let me see what you have chosen."

He drew from his pocket a case and opened it.

"Oh," she cried, "how pretty and how suitable for a girl!"

They were the prettiest, most airy set of pearls imaginable.

She sat and looked at them for a few seconds thoughtfully, and then handed them back.

"You are very good, and Jenny will be in ecstasies," she said.

"It is a happiness to me to give her pleasure," he returned. "I feel great tenderness for her. She is not like the young girls I have known. Her innocence is of a frank and noble quality, which is better than ignorance. One could not bear that the slightest shadow of sin or pain should fall upon her. The atmosphere surrounding her is so bright with pure happiness and the courage of youth."

Involuntarily he held out his hand.

"Will you" — he began. His voice fell and broke. "Will you go with me?" he ended.

He saw that she was troubled.

"Now?" she faltered.

"Yes — now."

There was a peculiar pause, — a moment, as it seemed to him, of breathless silence. This silence she broke by her rising slowly from her seat.

"Yes," she responded, "I will go. Why should I not?"

. . . . . .

It was midnight when they left the Trents', and Jenny stood upon the threshold, a bright figure in a setting of brightness, and kissed her hand to them as they went down the steps.

"I hope you will be better to-morrow, Arthur," she said.

He turned quickly to look up at her.

"I?"

"Yes. You look so tired. I might say haggard, if it was polite."

"It would not be polite," said Bertha, "so don't say it. Good-night, Jenny!"

But when they were seated in the carriage she glanced at her husband's face.

"*Are* you unwell?" she asked.

He passed his hand quickly across his forehead.

"A little fatigued," he replied. "It is nothing. To-morrow — to-morrow it will be all over."

And so silence fell upon them.

As they entered the drawing-room a clock chimed the half hour.

"So late as that!" exclaimed Bertha, and sank into a chair with a faint laugh. "Why, to-day is over," she said. "It is to-morrow."

M. Villefort had approached a side table. Upon it lay a peculiar-looking oblong box.

"Ah," he said, softly, "they have arrived."

"What are they?" Bertha asked.

He was bending over the box to open it, and did not turn toward her, as he replied: —

"It is a gift for a young friend of mine, — a brace of pistols. He has before him a long journey in the East, and he is young enough to have a fancy for firearms."

He was still examining the weapons when Bertha crossed the room on her way up-stairs, and she paused an instant to look at them.

"They are very handsome," she said. "One could almost wear them as ornaments."

"But they would have too threatening a look," he answered, lightly.

As he raised his eyes they met hers. She half started backward, moved by a new sense of the haggardness of his face.

"You *are* ill!" she exclaimed. "You are as colorless as marble."

"And you, too," he returned, still with the same tender lightness. "Let us hope that our 'to-morrow' will find us both better, and you say it is to-morrow now. Good-night!"

She went away without saying more. Weary as she was, she knew there was no sleep for her, and after dismissing her maid, she threw herself upon the lounge before the bedroom fire and lay there. To-night she felt as if her life had reached its climax. She burst into a passion of tears.

"Jenny! Jenny!" she cried, "how I envy — how I envy you!"

The recollection of Jenny shining in her pretty gala dress, and delighting in her birthday presents, and everybody else's pride and affection, filled her with a morbid misery and terror. She covered her face with her hands as she thought of it.

"Once," she panted, "as I looked at her to-night, for a moment I almost hated her. Am I so bad as that? — am I?"

Scarcely two seconds afterward she had sprung to her feet and was standing by the side of her couch, her heart beating with a rapid throb of fright, her limbs trembling. A strange sound had fallen suddenly upon the perfect silence of the night — a sound loud, hard, and sharp — the report of a pistol! What dread seized her she knew not. She was across the room and had wrenched the door open in an instant, then with flying feet down the corridor and the staircase. But half way down the stairs she began to cry out aloud, "Arthur! Arthur!" not conscious of her own voice — "Arthur, what is it?" The door of the drawing-room flew open before the fierce stroke of her palm.

M. Villefort stood where she had left him; but while his left hand supported his weight against the table, his right was thrust into his breast. One of the pistols lay at his feet.

She thought it was Death's self that confronted her in his face, but he spoke to her, trying faintly to smile.

"Do not come in," he said, "I have met with —

an accident. It is nothing. Do not come in. A servant" —

His last recollection was of her white face and white draperies as he fell, and somehow, dizzy, sick, and faint as he was, he seemed to hear her calling out, in a voice strangely like Jenny's, "Arthur! Arthur!"

In less than half an hour the whole house was astir. Up-stairs physicians were with the wounded man, down-stairs Mrs. Trent talked and wept over her daughter, after the manner of all good women. She was fairly terrified by Bertha's strange shudderings, quick, strained breath, and dilated eyes. She felt as if she could not reach her — as if she hardly made herself heard.

"You must calm yourself, Bertha," she would say. "Try to calm yourself. We must hope for the best. Oh, how could it have happened!"

It was in the midst of this that a servant entered with a letter, which he handed to his mistress. The envelope bore upon it nothing but her own name.

She looked at it with a bewildered expression.

"For me?" she said.

"It fell from Monsieur's pocket as we carried him up-stairs," replied the man.

"Don't mind it now, Bertha," said her mother. "Ah, poor M. Villefort!"

But Bertha had opened it mechanically and was reading it.

At first it seemed as if it must have been written in a language she did not understand; but after the first few sentences a change appeared. Her breath came and went more quickly than before — a kind of horror grew in her eyes. At the last she uttered a low, struggling cry. The paper was crushed in her hand, she cast one glance around the room as if in bewildering search for refuge, and flung herself upon her mother's breast.

"Save me, mother!" she said. "Help me! If he dies now, I shall go mad!"

Afterward, in telling her story at home, good Mrs. Trent almost broke down.

"Oh, Jenny!" she said. "Just to think of the poor fellow's having had it in his pocket then! Of course I did not see it, but one can fancy that it was something kind and tender, — perhaps some little surprise he had planned for her. It seemed as if she could not bear it."

M. Villefort's accident was the subject of discussion for many days. He had purchased a wonderful pair of pistols as a gift for a young friend. How it had happened that one had been loaded none knew; it was just possible that he had been seized with the whim to load it himself — at all events, it had gone off in his hands. An inch — nay, half an inch — to the right, and Madame Villefort, who flew down-stairs at the sound of the report, would only have found a dead man at her feet.

"*Ma foi!*" said M. Renard, repressing his smile; "this is difficult for Monsieur, but it may leave '*la petite Dame*' at liberty."

Madame de Castro flew at him with flashing eyes.

"Silence!" she said, "if you would not have me strike you with my cane." And she looked as if she were capable of doing it.

Upon his sick-bed M. Villefort was continually haunted by an apparition — an apparition of a white face and white draperies, such as he had seen as he fell. Sometimes it was here, sometimes there, sometimes near him, and sometimes indistinct and far away. Sometimes he called out to it and tried to extend his arms; again he lay and watched it, murmuring gentle words, and smiling mournfully.

Mrs. Trent and the doctor were in despair. Madame Villefort obstinately refused to be forced from her husband's room. There were times when they thought she might sink and die there herself. She would not even leave it when they obliged her to sleep. Having been slight and frail from ill health before, she became absolutely attenuated. Soon all her beauty would be gone.

"Do you know," said Mrs. Trent to her husband, "I have found out that she always carries that letter in her breast? I see her put her hand to it in the strangest way a dozen times a day."

One night, awakening from a long sleep to a

clearer mental consciousness than usual, M. Villefort found his apparition standing over him.

She stood with one hand clinched upon her breast, and she spoke to him.

"Arthur!" she said, — "Arthur, do you know me?"

He answered her, "Yes."

She slipped down upon her knees, and held up in her hand a letter crushed and broken.

"Try to keep your mind clear while you listen to me," she implored. "Try — try! I must tell you, or I shall die. I am not the bad woman you think me. I never had read it — I had not seen it. I think he must have been mad. Once I loved him, but he killed my love himself. I could not have been bad like that. Jenny! — mother! — Arthur! believe me! believe me!"

In this supreme moment of her anguish and shame she forgot all else. She stretched forth her hands, panting.

"Believe me! It is true! Try to understand! Some one is coming! Say one word before it is too late!"

"I understand," he whispered, "and I believe." He made a weak effort to touch her hand, but failed. He thought that perhaps it was the chill and numbness of death which stole over him and held him bound. When the nurse, whose footsteps they had heard, entered, she found him lying with

glazed eyes, and Madame Villefort fallen in a swoon at the bedside.

And yet, from this time forward the outside world began to hear that his case was not so hopeless after all.

"Villefort will possibly recover," it was said at first; then, "Villefort improves, it seems;" and, at last, "Villefort is out of danger. Who would have thought it?"

Nobody, however, could say that Madame had kept pace with her husband. When Monsieur was sufficiently strong to travel, and was advised to do so, there were grave doubts as to the propriety of his wife's accompanying him.

But she would not listen to those doubts.

"I will not stay in Paris," she said to her mother. "I want to be free from it, and Jenny has promised to go with us."

They were to go into Normandy, and the day before their departure Ralph Edmondstone came to bid them good-by.

Of the three he was by far the most haggard figure, and when Bertha came down to meet him in the empty drawing-room, he became a wretched figure with a broken, hopeless air. For a few seconds Bertha did not speak, but stood a pace or two away looking at him. It seemed, in truth, as she waited there in her dark, nun-like dress, that nearly all her beauty had left her. There remained

only her large sad eyes and pretty hair, and the touching look of extreme youth. In her hand she held the crushed letter.

"See!" she said at last, holding this out to him. "I am not so bad — so bad as that."

He caught it from her hand and tore it into fragments. He was stabbed through and through with shame and remorse. After all, his love had been strong enough here, and his comprehension keen enough to have made him repent in the dust of the earth, in his first calm hour, the insult he had put upon her.

"Forgive me!" he cried; "oh, forgive me!"

The few steps between them might have been a myriad of miles.

"I did love you — long ago," she said; "but you never thought of me. You did not understand me then — nor afterward. All this winter my love has been dying a hard death. You tried to keep it alive, but — you did not understand. You only humiliated and tortured me. And I knew that if I had loved you more, you would have loved me less. See!" holding up her thin hand, "I have been worn out in the struggle between my unhappiness and remorse and you."

"You do not know what love is!" he burst forth, stung into swift resentment.

A quick sob broke from her.

"Yes, I do," she answered. "I — I have seen it."

"You mean M. Villefort!" he cried in desperate jealous misery. "You think that he"—

She pointed to the scattered fragments of the letter.

"He had that in his pocket when he fell," she said. "He thought that I had read it. If I had been your wife, and you had thought so, would you have thought that I was worth trying to save — as he tried to save me?"

"What!" he exclaimed, shamefacedly. "Has he seen it?"

"Yes," she answered, with another sob, which might have been an echo of the first. "And that is the worst of all."

There was a pause, during which he looked down at the floor, and even trembled a little.

"I have done you more wrong than I thought," he said.

"Yes," she replied; "a thousand-fold more."

It seemed as if there might have been more to say, but it was not said.

In a little while he roused himself with an effort.

"I am not a villain," he said. "I can do one thing. I can go to Villefort — if you care."

She did not speak. So he moved slowly away until he reached the door. With his hand upon the handle he turned and looked back at her.

"Oh, it is good-by — good-by!" he almost groaned.

"Yes."

He could not help it — few men could have done so. His expression was almost fierce as he spoke his next words.

"And you will love him — yes, you will love *him*."

"No," she answered, with bitter pain. "I am not worthy."

. . . . . .

It was a year or more before the Villeforts were seen in Paris again, and Jenny enjoyed her wanderings with them wondrously. In fact, she was the leading member of the party. She took them where she chose, — to queer places, to ugly places, to impossible places, but never from first to last to any place where there were not, or at least had not been, Americans as absurdly erratic as themselves.

The winter before their return they were at Genoa, among other places; and it was at Genoa that one morning, on opening a drawer, Bertha came upon an oblong box, the sight of which made her start backward and put her hand to her beating side. M. Villefort approached her hurriedly. An instant later, however, he started also and shut the drawer.

"Come away," he said, taking her hand gently. "Do not remain here."

But he was pale, too, and his hand was unsteady. He led her to the window and made her sit down.

"Pardon me," he said. "I should not have left them there."

"You did not send them to your friend?" she faltered.

"No."

He stood for a moment or so, and looked out of the window at the blue sea which melted into the blue sky, at the blue sky which bent itself into the blue sea, at the white sails flecking the deep azure, at the waves hurrying in to break upon the sand.

"That" — he said at length, tremulously, and with pale lips — "that was false."

"Was false!" she echoed.

"Yes," hoarsely, "it was false. There was no such friend. It was a lie — they were meant only for myself."

She uttered a low cry of anguish and dread.

"Ah *mon Dieu!*" he said. "You could not know. I understood all, and had been silent. I was nothing — a jest — '*le monsieur de la petite dame*,' as they said, — only that. I swore that I would save you. When I bade you adieu that night, I thought it was my last farewell. There was no accident. Yes — there was one. I did not die, as I had intended. My hand was not steady enough. And since then" —

She rose up, crying out to him as she had done on that terrible night, —

"Arthur! Arthur!"

He came closer to her.

"Is it true," he said, — "is it true that my prayers have not been in vain? Is it true that at last — at last, you have learned — have learned" —

She stretched forth her arms to him.

"It is true!" she cried. "Yes, it is true! — it is true!"

SMETHURSTSES.

SMETHURSTSES, mum — yes, mum, on accounts of me bein' Smethurst an' the wax-works mine. Fifteen year I've been in the business, an' if I live fifteen year more I shall have been in it thirty; for wax-works is the kind of a business as a man gets used to and friendly with, after a manner. Lor' bless you! there's no tellin' how much company them there wax-works is. I've picked a companion or so out of the collection. Why, there's Lady Jane Grey, as is readin' her Greek Testyment; when her works is in order an' she's set a-goin', liftin' her eyes gentle-like from her book, I could fancy as she knew every trouble I'd had an' was glad as they was over. And there's the Royal Fam'ly on the dais all a settin' together as free an' home-like an' smilin' as if they wasn't nothin' more than flesh an' blood like you an' me an' not a crown among 'em. Why, they've actually been a comfort to me. I've set an' took my tea on my knee on the step there many a time, because it seemed cheerfuller than in my own little place at

the back. If I was a talkin' man I might object to the stillness an' a general fixedness in the gaze, as perhaps is a objection as wax-works is open to as a rule, though I can't say as it ever impressed me as a very affable gentleman once said it impressed him.

"Smethurst," says he, "you must have a blamed clear conscience (though, bein' rather free-spoken, 'blamed' was not the precise word employed)—you must have a blamed clear conscience or I'm blamed if you could stand so many blamed pair of staring eyes gimleting you year in an' year out. An' as to them with works," says he, "they're worse than the others, for even if they turn away a minute they always turn back again, as if they wouldn't trust you out of their sight."

But somehow, I never thought of it in that way, an' as to not liking the quiet, why shouldn't I? In a general way I haven't got no more to say than they have, and so it suits me well enough. I will own though, as I've never felt particular comfortable in the Chamber of Horrors, an' never wouldn't have had one, but even in a small collection like mine the public demands it, an' won't hear of bein' satisfied without one; "for," says they, "what's the use of a wax-works without Manning an' them, an' the prisoners in the dock, an' the knife as the young woman was cut up in pieces with?" So I was obliged to have the little back room hung with black, like Madame Tussaud's in

a small way, and fitted up with murders, and a model of the guillotine, and two or three heads of parties as come to a untimely end in the French Revolution. But it aint my taste for all that, and there's always a heaviness in the air as makes me low-like an' I'm glad to turn the key on 'em at night an' leave 'em to have a rest from the stares an' talk an' stirrin' up of their sin, an' the shame an' agony of their dreadful deaths. Good Lord! it turns me sick to think of them havin' been real livin' creatures, with mothers an' wives an' friends, some of 'em perhaps livin' to-day, all crushed an' blasted with the horror they've went through.

But that aint the story as I've half-way promised to tell you. If you really want to hear it, mum, I don't mind tellin' it, though I don't know as it will be interestin' — I've often wondered if it would be as interestin' to outsiders as it was to me, bein' as it's the story of a friend of mine as was something like me an' likewise had a wax-works. Would you mind settin' there, mum, next to the Japanese party? His lady's works was broke, an' her bein' absent at the cleaner's leaves the chair vacant most convenient.

His name it was Joe — this acquaintance of mine, an', as I said, he was somethin' of my build an' temper. He was a quiet chap an' a lonely chap, an' London was his native place — leastways, I don't see as it could have been no nativer than it

was, bein' as he was laid at the door of a London foundlin' when he wasn't no more than a few days old, and London fed him and clothed him until he was big enough to take care of hisself. He hadn't a easy life of it as you may be sure. He wasn't handsome nor yet sharp, he couldn't answer back nor yet give cheek; he could only take it, which he had to do frequent.

There was plenty of folks as give him the character of a nat'ral born fool, an' they may have been right. They said as no chap as had his right senses could be as good-natured an' ready to forgive a injury, an' above all as slow to suspect as one was bein' done him. I think they thought his bein' slow to suspect harm a-goin' on was the best proof of his bein' a fool, — an' he wasn't ready enough with his tongue to argy the point. He wasn't never good at a argyment — Joe wasn't.

Well, he growed up, an' he did first one thing an' then another, until at last he was picked up by a travelin' wax-works showman as had just such a collection as this here of mine — havin' in it just such a Lady Jane Grey, and likewise a sim'lar Royal Fam'ly.

"Well," says the wax-works man, when Joe first goes to ask for work, "what can you do?"

"Not much, perhaps," says Joe; "leastways, I've not been in the business before; but if you'll give me a job, Mister, I can do what I'm told."

The showman gives him a look from head to foot.

"Well," says he, "at all events, you're not one of them blarsted sharp uns as knows everythin' an' can't dust a figger without knockin' its head off. I've had enough of them sort" — savage like — "a-ruinin' my Richard Cure the Lion, an' a-settin' Mary Queen o' Scottses insides all wrong" (which was what his last young man had been a-doin').

"No," answers Joe, slow an' serious, "I don't think as I'd do that."

The showman gives him another look, an' seems sort of satisfied.

"Go inside an' get your dinner," he says. "I'll try you just because you haven't got so much cheek."

And he did try him, an' pretty well they got on together, after a while. Slowness is not a objection in a wax-works as much as in a business as is less delicater. I've thought myself as p'r'aps wax-works has their feelin's, an' knows who means respec'ful by 'em an' who doesn't, an' this Joe meant respec'ful, an' never took no liberties as he could help. He dusted 'em reg'lar, an' wound 'em up an' set 'em goin' accordin' to rules; but he never tried no larks on 'em, an' that was why he gets along so well with his master.

"That other chap was too fond of his larks," says the showman, kind of gloomy whenever he mentions the first young man. He never forgive him to the day of his death for openin' the collection one day with Charles the Secondses helmet on

Mrs. Hannah Mooreses head, an' Daniel in the Lions' Den in William Pennses spectacles, with some other party's umbrella under his arm.

But Joe weren't of a witty turn, an' not given to jokes, which is not suited to wax-works as a rule, collections bein' mostly serious. An', as I say, him an' his master got along so well that one day, after they had been together a year or so, the showman, he says to him, "Joe," says he, "I'm blessed if I'd mind takin' you in as a partner." An' that very mornin' he has the reg'lar papers made out, an' the thing was done without no more said about it. An' partners they was till he died, which happened very unexpected — him a sayin' sudden one night when they was a-shuttin' up together, "Joe, old chap, I'm blessed if my works aint a runnin' down," an' gives one look round at the figgers, an' then drops — which the medical man said as it was dropsy of the heart. When his things was looked over, it was found he'd left everythin' to Joe except one partic'lar ugly figger, as turned his eyes with a squint an' couldn't be done nothin' with, an' him he'd left to a old maid relation as had a spite agin him; "for," says the will, "she'd ought to have him, for he's the only chap I ever see yet as could match her — let alone stand her, an' it's time she was takin' a partner, if she's goin' to." They *did* say as it was nearly the party's death, for, though they'd quarreled reg'lar for twenty-five years an' hated each other deadly,

she'd always believed as she'd come into his belongin's if she outlived him, thinkin' as he would make no will.

Well, havin' had company for so long, it was nat'ral as Joe should feel lonely-like after this, an' now an' then get a trifle down-hearted. He didn't find travelin' all alone as pleasant as it had been, so when he was makin' anythin' at all in a place, he'd stay in it as long as he could, an' kind of try to persuade hisself as it was kind of home to him, an' he had things to hold him to it. He had a good many feelin's in secret as might have been laughed at if people had knowed 'em. He knowed well enough as *he* wasn't the kind of chap to have a home of his own — men as has homes has wives, an' who'd have wanted to marry *him*, bless you — he wasn't the build as young women take to. He weren't nothin' to look at, an' he couldn't chaff, nor yet lark, nor yet be ready with his tongue. In general, young women was apt to make game of him when their sweethearts brought 'em into the collection, an' there was times when a pretty, light-hearted one would put him out so as he scarcely knowed the Royal Fam'ly by name, an' mixed up the Empress of the French an' Lucreecher Borgiar in the description.

So he lived on, lonesome enough, for two or three year, an' then somethin' happened. He went up to London to stay while the races was goin' on, an' one day, when the collection was pretty full,

there comes in a swell party with a girl on his arm. The swell, as was a tall, fine-lookin' chap, was in high sperits, an' had just come in for the lark of the thing, Joe sees plain, for he were makin' his jokes free an' easy about everythin', an' laughin' fit to kill hisself every now an' then. But the girl were different; she were a little rosy thing, with round, shinin' eyes, an' a soft, little timid way with her. She laughed too, but only shy an' low, an' more because she was happy an' because the swell laughed. She wasn't the kind of young woman as the swell ought to have been a-goin' with. She was dressed in her best, an' was as pretty as a pictur'; but her clothes was all cheap, an' Joe could see as she belonged to the workin' class, an' was out for a holiday. She held close to the gentleman's arm, an' seemed half frightened, an' yet so glad an' excited that she would have minded you of a six-year-old child. It were the first time she'd ever been into a wax-works, an' things looked wonderful to her. When they come to Lady Jane Grey she was quite took with her, an' begun to ask questions in the innocentest way.

"She's one of the nobility, sir, isn't she?" she says to her companion. "Did you ever see her? Isn't she beautiful, sir?"

He laughs delighted, an' squeezes her hand a bit with his arm.

"No, Polly," he says. "I never saw her until to-day. She didn't keep her head on her shoulders

long enough. It was cut off some time ago, my dear." An' then he whispers: "An' it wasn't nearly as pretty a head as yours, Polly, either."

The little girl blushes like a rose, an' tries to laugh too; but Joe knew as she'd took the words more to her innocent heart than was good for her.

"Lor' me!" she says. "What a shame it was to cut her head off, — an' her so sweet an' quiet!"

"Yes, Polly," says the young gentleman, a-laughin' more. "Very quiet. Wax-works are, as a rule. A nice time a proprietor would have, if they were not, with such a lot of queer customers, — Bloody Mary, for instance, and Henry the Eighth, and Nana Sahib, and John Knox, and Lucretia Borgia, — though you don't know much of their amiable characteristics, my dear."

They went on in that way through the whole room, — him a-jokin' an' makin' light, an' her enjoyin' herself an' admirin' everythin' she set eyes on, an' Joe, a-watchin' her. He couldn't help it. Somethin' queer seemed to have took hold of him the minute he first sees her. He kep' a-wishin' as the collection was ten times as big, so as it would take longer for her to go through. He couldn't bear the thought of seein' the last of her, an' when they comes to the Russian party, as stands near the door, dressed for the winter season, — his nose bein' protected with fur, after the fashion of the country, — his heart were in his mouth, an' when she passed out into the crowd, he seemed to

swallow it with a gulp, as took it into the heels of his boots.

"Lor'!" he says, all of a tremble in his insides, "I shan't never see her again, — never!"

He hadn't no spirit in him all that day, nor the next either. It was as if somethin' altogether out of common had happened, an' he couldn't never be the same man again. He were miserable, an' down an' nervous, an' there wasn't a figger in the collection as didn't seem to know it. He took to standin' at the door whenever he could, a-lookin' at the people a-passin' by. An' yet he scarcely knowed what for. If he'd seen the face he wanted to, he wouldn't 'a' dared to say a word, nor yet to move a step; an' still he was a-hungerin' day an' night for a glimpse of what couldn't be no good to him.

Well, if you'll believe me, mum, instead of gettin' easier as time went on, he got uneasier. He was as lonesome again as he had been, an' he took his tea a-settin' with the Royal Fam'ly reg'lar, — he couldn't have swallowed it by hisself. After shuttin' up, he'd go out wanderin' in the streets melancholy and wistful like, an' one night he stops short all at once, a-feelin' hisself turn pale in consequence of it comin' to him sudden what ailed him.

"I've fell in love," says he, fearful an' respec'ful, — "that's it, — an' there's no help for me. I'm not the man as should have done it, for I can't look for nothin' to come out of it."

He give hisself up to it, because he didn't see no way out of it. Nobody wasn't troubled but hisself, an' so it didn't matter. He got pale an' thin, an' didn't sleep well o' nights, but there wasn't no one to bother themselves about him, — there weren't even a soul as he could 'a' left the collection to, if he'd 'a' died.

It went pretty hard with him to leave London, an' when he did leave it, he couldn't stay away; an' I'm blessed if he didn't come back in less than six months; for, says he to hisself: —

"Here's a place as is somethin' more than the others, at least, though it is in a sorrowful way, an' I'd rather as the collection would earn me a bare livin' in a side street in London, than make money away from it. I might see her again; an', Lor' bless me! what do I want of money a-layin' back?"

Well, the very first night after he came back, he did see her again. He'd set out the collection in the room he'd hired, an' then he'd gone out in the old wanderin' way, an' he hadn't hardly stepped into the street before he comes on a crowd gathered around somethin' near a lamp-post; so he stops nat'ral, an' makes inquiries.

"Anybody hurt?" says he.

"No, not exactly," answers the man he'd spoke to. "It's a young woman as has fainted, I think."

He makes his way a bit nearer, an' as soon as he claps his eyes on the deathly face under the

lamp-light, he sees as it's the face he's been lookin' for an' thinkin' about so long.

"It's her!" he says, so shook as he didn't know what he was doin'. "It's Polly!"

"Polly!" says the woman as was holdin' her head. "Do you know her, young man? If you do, you'd better speak to her, for she's just comin' to, poor little thing!"

He knowed he couldn't explain, an' he thinks, besides, as the feelin' he had for her might make his face look friendlier than a stranger's, so he kneels down as the woman tells him, just as she opens her eyes.

The crowd seemed to frighten her, an' she began to tremble an' cry; an' so Joe speaks to her, low, an' quiet, an' respec'ful:—

"Don't be afraid, miss," he says, — "don't. You'll be well directly."

She catches hold of his hand like a frightened baby.

"Send them away!" she says. "Please, don't let them stare at me. I can't bear it!"

"Miss," says Joe, "would you mind bein' took into a collection, if this good lady would go with you?"

"A collection!" she says, all bewildered. "I haven't got any money. What is it for? Oh, please make them go away!"

"Not a hat took 'round, miss," says Joe. "Oh dear, no! I was alludin' to a wax-works which is

quite convenient, an' belongs to me, an' a fire an' a cup of tea ready immediate, an' a good lady to stay with you until you feel better, — an' all quite private."

"Take me anywhere, please," she says. "Thank you, sir. Oh, take me away."

So between them, Joe an' the good woman helps her up an' leads her to the door as was but a few steps off, an' Joe takes them in an' on to the back room, where the fire was a burnin' an' the kettle singin', an' there he has them both to sit down.

The woman makes the girl lie down on the sofa by the fire, an' she bein' weak an' wanderin' yet did as she was told without askin' a question.

"A cup of tea'll set her up," says the woman, "an' then she can tell us where she lives an' we can take her home."

Joe went about like a man in a dream. His legs was unsteady under him, an' he was obliged to ask the woman to pour the water on the tea, an' while she was doin' it he takes a candle and slips into the collection secret, to make sure the Royal Fam'ly was there an' he wasn't out of his head.

The woman, havin' girls of her own, was very motherly an' handy an' did all she could, but she couldn't stay long, and after she'd give Polly her tea, she says she must go.

"An' I dare say as the young man as is so kind-hearted'll come along with me, an' we'll see you home together, my dear."

They both looks at Polly then a-waitin' to see what she would say, but she only looked frightened, an' the next minute hides her face in her little hands on the sofa-arm an' begins to sob.

"I haven't got no home," she says, "nor nowhere to go. What shall I do — what shall I do?"

Then the woman looks very serious an' a bit hard-like about the mouth — though not as hard as some might have done.

"Where's your mother?" she says, just the least short.

"I haven't none," says Polly. "I lost her a month ago."

"You aint in mournin'," says the woman.

"No, ma'am," says Polly, "I couldn't afford it."

"An' your father?"

But this made the poor little thing cry harder than ever. She wrung her hands an' sobbed pitiful.

"Oh, father!" she says. "Good, kind, easy father, if you was alive I wouldn't be like this. You always loved me — always. You never was hard, father."

"What have you been livin' on?" says the woman, lookin' as if she was a-relentin'.

"I was in a shop" —

But Joe couldn't stand no more.

"Ma'am," he says in a undertone, "if a pound or so, which not bein' a fam'ly man an' a good

business at times, I have it to spare, would make matters straight, here it is." An' he pulls a handful of silver out of his pocket and holds it out quite eager an' yet fearful of givin' offense.

Well, then the woman looks sharp at him.

"What do you mean?" she asks. "Do you want me to take her home with *me?*"

"Ma'am," says Joe, "yes, if a pound or so"—

But she stops him by turning to the girl.

"Are you a respectable young woman?" she asks.

The pretty face was hid on the sofa-arm, an' the little figure looked so droopin' that Joe could stand that less than he could stand the other.

"Ma'am," says he hurried, "if five pound"—

It seemed like the woman's heart was touched, though she answered him rough.

"Young man," she says, "you're a fool, but if you don't want me to speak out before her, take me into the next room an' we'll talk it over."

So Joe took her into the collection, an' the end of it was that they made an agreement, an' sharp as she seemed, the woman showed as she was fair and straight an' would take no advantage. She let Joe persuade her at last to take the girl with her an' ask no questions, an' he was to pay her a trifle to make it straight an' no burden to her.

"Though," says she, "if she had a different face an' one as wasn't so innocent an' young, I wouldn't take her at no price, for I've girls of my own as

I tell you, an' p'r'aps that's what makes me easier on her."

When they was gone away, Joe goes into the room they'd left an' sets hisself down by the fire an' stares at the sofa.

"She set there," he says, "an' she laid her head on the arm, and likewise drunk out of that there cup. I've seen her again as sure as I'm a man."

An' not a wink of sleep does he get that night, but sits, an' stares, an' thinks until the fire dies out into ashes, an' it's gray early mornin'.

Through a delicateness of feelin' he does not go anywheres near her for a day or so, an' then the woman — whose name is Mrs. Bonny — calls in to see him.

"Well," she says, "it seems all right so far. She's a nice little thing, an' she's got work in a millinery down town, an' I've kept my word an' asked no questions, an' will you come an' have a cup of tea with us this evening?"

Of course he went, glad enough, though awkward, an' he saw her again, an' she was prettier an' innocenter lookin' than ever, though pale an' timid. When she give her hand at partin' an' says, "Thank you for bein' so kind to me," he couldn't say a single word in answer, he were so bashful an' upsot.

He was always bashful enough, even after they knowed each other better an' was good friends, which they came to be. She seemed to take a

childish likin' to him, an' always to be a rememberin' as she'd somethin' to be grateful for.

"What made you so kind to me that night, Joe?" she'd say. "You hadn't never seen me before, you know. Oh, how good you was, Joe!" An' he hadn't never the courage to tell her as he had.

Through one thing an' another, it was quite a while before she chanced to see the collection, but, at last, one afternoon, they all comes down — Mrs. Bonny, the girls, and Polly.

Polly was a-goin' 'round with Joe, an' he couldn't help wonderin' anxious if she would remember as she had seen the place an' him before. An' she did. Before she had been in the room three minutes, she begins to look round strange an' puzzled, an' when she comes to Lady Jane Grey, she catches Joe's arm an' gives a tremblin' start.

"I've been here before," she says. "I was here last races — I — oh, Joe," — an' she breaks off with a sob.

He sets her in a chair and stands before her, so as the Bonnys can't see.

"Don't cry, Polly," he says, but he says it with a sinkin' feelin', because he sees as she doesn't remember him at all, an' that she hasn't forgot her handsome sweetheart.

She doesn't cry much more for fear of the Bonnys, but she doesn't laugh nor talk no more all the rest of the day, an' her little downcast face

was enough to make a man's heart ache. I dare say you'll think as Joe was a fool to hang on so in the face of all this, but it was his way to hang on to a thing quiet an' steady, and you remember what I've said about his simpleness. So he does hang on without a bit of hope until through Polly herself he speaks almost without knowing it, an' it happens in the collection just three months from the day as she recognized Lady Jane Grey.

"What made you so good to me that night, Joe?" she says again to him, mournful an' gentle. "I never shall forget it. No one else would have been so good."

"Polly," he says, a-takin' out his bandanna an' wipin' his forehead, for, though a cool day, he had broke out in a free perspiration, —"Polly, it was because I loved you." An' he went straight through an' told her the whole story.

"But," says he at the end, "don't let that come between you an' me, Polly, for why should it? You have nothing to give me, Polly, an', consequently, I don't ask nothin'."

"No," says she, in a half whisper, "I haven't nothin' to give no one."

An' yet, it wasn't three weeks before —— but, I'll tell you how it happened.

He'd been invited to the Bonnys' to tea, an when he went there, he found Polly ailin'. She was white an' nervous, an' her eyes looked big an' woful.

"She had a fright last night," Mrs. Bonny told him. "Some scamp of a fellow followed her all the way home an' it's upsot her."

She hardly spoke all the evenin', but lay back in the big rockin'-chair a-lookin' at Joe every now an' then as if she was askin' him to help her, an' when he'd bid 'em all good-night an' was half-way down the street, he hears the door open again, an' who should come runnin' after him but her, all out of breath, an' catches him by the arm, cryin': —

"Joe," she says, "do you — do you love me yet, Joe?"

"Polly," he says, "what is it, my dear?" an' hearin' her ask him such a question, turned him almost sick with joy an' pain together.

"Because," she sobs out, — "because, if you love me yet, — take me, Joe, an' keep me safe."

An' before he knows how it happens, he has her in his arms, with her face against his coat.

After they was both a bit quiet, he takes her back to Mrs. Bonny, an' says he: —

"Mrs. Bonny, Polly an' me is goin' to be married."

An' Mrs. Bonny says: —

"Well, now, Polly, that's sensible; an' though I say it as shouldn't, I must own as I wouldn't care if it was 'Meliar."

An' she kisses Polly, an' the girls kisses her, an' they all shakes hands, an' it's a settled thing.

They was married almost immediate, an' Joe was

as happy as a man could be under the circumstances; for, mind you, he wasn't a-deceivin' hisself, an' knowed well enough as his wasn't the kind of a marriage where there's two hearts beatin' warm together, an' both is full of joy and hope.

"But," says he, "I never expected this much, an' I'd be a queer sort of chap not to be grateful as the woman I love could turn to me for comfort when she needed it; an' if love can bring love, mine'll be like to do it some day."

So he waited an' hoped, and did his best, an' he sometimes thought as Polly drawed a bit nearer to him as time went on. At any rate, she was a good, gentle little thing, an' always seemed tryin' to please him in a wistful, longin' way, as if she had somethin' to make up for. Once, when they was settin' together at night, she come an' knelt down before him, and hid her face on his knee.

"Joe," she says, "was you never afraid to marry me, — when — when you remember as I'd never told you nothin'?"

"No," he answers. "No, Polly — never."

"But I might have been a wicked girl," she whispers.

"No," says he, stout and tender. "You mightn't, Polly;" an' he stoops down an' kisses her pretty hair.

She burst out a-cryin', and creeps closer, so as to lay her cheek on his hand.

"I might have been," she says; "but I wasn't, Joe, — I wasn't, because God an' you helped me."

An' yet he knows as there's somethin' behind as keeps her from bein' happy, though she tries so hard an' faithful. He always sees the wistfulness in her eyes, an' hears it in her voice, an' time an' time again he knows she's lyin' awake at night a-grievin' quiet. One mornin', after she's been lower than common, a letter comes to her, an' he sees her turn white, an' after she holds it a minute, she walks up to the fire an' throws it in, an' before he goes back to the collection, she comes an' catches him 'round the neck, an' says: —

"I want to be a good wife, Joe, — I want to be, an' I will," an' cries a bit again.

That very afternoon there comes a swell into the wax-works, an' as soon as Joe sets eyes on him, he knows it's the chap he first see Polly with in the race-week, and there he is a-saunterin' 'round an' pretendin' to be unconcerned, an' yet keepin' a sharp look-out around him. So Joe goes up to him, and speaks to him quite firm and low: —

"Was you lookin' for any one, sir?" he asks.

The swell looks at him cool enough.

"What's that you say, my good fellow?" he answers.

"Well," says Joe, "nothing in a general way, perhaps; only, sir, I was a-thinkin' as p'r'aps you might be lookin' for some one as was unprotected an' helpless, an' there aint no such a party here; an' if you'd like your money returned at the door, — me bein' the proprietor of the collection, — I shouldn't have no objection."

"D—— your collection!" says the swell; but he turns 'round an' goes out, half a-laughin'.

At tea that evenin', Polly was dreadful restless an' timid, an' seemed to be a-listenin' to somethin', an' after a bit Joe finds out what it is, — it's footsteps a-passin' back'ard an' for'ard near the house, — passin' back'ard an' for'ard reg'lar; an' they goes on that way for a good hour, an' then stops; an' all the time Polly sits close to Joe, as if she was afraid to leave him, her eyes shinin', an' her voice shakin' when she speaks. Only that somethin' tells him as she doesn't want him to go, he would have went out; an' in the middle of the night he was almost sorry he didn't, for she started out of her sleep, callin' out, frightened: —

"Oh, the footsteps! — the footsteps! Make them go away! — save me from them, Joe, or I must go!"

She was quite ill an' weak for a month, an' then, queer enough, a change come over her. She got her color back gradual, an' went out oftener, an' was brighter when she was in the house. She went to see the Bonnys frequent, a-helpin' them get ready to take their trip to the seaside, which they did reg'lar; for though workin'-people, they was comfortable off. There was such a alteration in her, that Joe began to feel hopeful, an' was as cheerful as the day is long; an' well he might be, for she actually lays her pretty head on his breast once, an' whispers: —

"Joe, I believe I'm goin' to be happy, — an' it'. all through you bein' so lovin' an' patient. You bore with me a long time, — didn't you, Joe?"

They had been married near twelve months then, an' the week the Bonnys goes away, Joe has to go too, bein' called away by business; an' sorry enough he was to go. But he says to Polly when he kisses her good-by at the door: —

"If you get lonesome, pack up an' go to the Bonnys, my dear, an' let them take care of you; but I won't be no longer than I can help."

An' she gives his neck a little wistful squeeze, half laughin', with the tears in her eyes, an says: —

"No, you mustn't, because no one can take such care of me as you; an' I want you, Joe."

Well, it happened as his business was got over quicker than he'd looked for, an' he gets home within two weeks. But when he gets back he doesn't find Polly. Things are a bit upsot, as if she'd gone off in a hurry, an' he finds a little letter on the table as says, "I've gone to the Bonnys', dear Joe — it was so lonesome without you."

An' when he reads it he sees tear-marks on it, an' he says to hisself, "Why, here a tear fell, Polly. You must have been a bit low, my dear." He had that there letter in his hand, an' was still a-lookin' at it, when there comes a knock at the door an' he answers it, an' in walks Mrs. Bonny herself.

"Well," she says, "you've come back, have you? How are you, an' how's Polly?"

"Polly!" says he. "Polly!"

"Yes, to be sure," she answers him back, "Polly; for, to tell the truth, I've been a bit anxious about her, an' that's why I come here the minute I got back to town."

Well, they both stood still an' looked at each other — her a bit impatient, an' him cold an' dazed.

"Mrs. Bonny, ma'am," says he at last, "Polly went to you a week ago, for here's the letter as tells me so."

"Joe," says Mrs. Bonny, a-fallin' back an' turnin' pale too, "Polly aint never been nigh us!"

"Then," says Joe, "she's dead."

He never thought of nothin' else but that some cruel thing had happened as had cut her off in her innocence an' youth. Think harm of Polly, as had laid her cheek against his breast an' begged him to come back to her? Lor' bless you, ma'am, he loved her far too tender!

It was Mrs. Bonny as first said the word, for even good women is sometimes hard on women, you know. She followed him into the room an' looked about her, an' she broke out a-cryin', angry an' yet sorrowful: —

"Oh, Joe! Joe!" she says. "How could she have the heart to do it?"

But Joe only answered her, bewildered: —

"The heart, ma'am!" he says. "Polly?"

"The heart to leave you," she says. "The heart to go to ruin when there was so much to hold

her back — the heart to shame a honest man as loved her, an' her knowin' what she did!"

"Ruin, ma'am?" says Joe. "Shame, ma'am? Polly?"

He rouses hisself to understand what she meant, an' he sees it's what the other people will say, too, an' he cannot help it or save Polly from it.

"It isn't true," he cries, wild-like. "It isn't nat'ral as it should be. She's trusted me all along, an' we was beginnin' to be happy, an'" —

"You've trusted her," says Mrs. Bonny. "An' so have I; but she's kept her own secrets, an' we knowed she had 'em. An' there's my 'Meliar as heard of some fine gentleman a-follerin' her on the street an' talkin' to her."

But Joe stops her.

"If she doesn't come back," he says, "she's dead, an' she died innocent," an' wouldn't hear another word.

As soon as he could get his strength together, he gets up and begins to set the place in order, a-makin' it look just as much as if she was there as he could. He folds away the two or three things as she's left about, an' puts 'em in the drawers an' shuts 'em up, an' Mrs. Bonny sets a-watchin' him. She couldn't understand the slow, quiet way as he does everything.

"Joe," she says, when he's done, "what do you mean?"

"Mrs. Bonny, ma'am," he says, "I mean to trust

her, an' I mean to be ready for her an' a-waitin', whenever she comes back, an' *how*ever."

"However?" says Mrs. Bonny.

"Yes, mum," he says, "howsumever, for love isn't a thing as is easy killed; but, mind you, I'm not afraid as her soul has come to hurt, an' I've no thought of givin' her up."

Mrs. Bonny, she sees he's in earnest, an' she shakes her head. She meant kind enough, but it wasn't her as had been in love with Polly, an' had worked so hard to win her. When she went Joe followed her to the door.

"Ma'am," he says, "have you any objections as this here should be a secret betwixt you an' me?"

Well, I've no doubt as it was a bit hard on her as she shouldn't have the tellin' of it and the talkin' of it over, an' she couldn't help showin' it in her looks; but she's a good soul, as I've said, an' she promises, an' Joe he answers her, "Thank you, ma'am; an' would you mind givin' me your hand on it?" An' she does, an' so they part.

You may think what the next week or so was to Joe, when I tell you as, though he tried night an' day, he couldn't hear a word from Polly, or find no sign. An' still believin' in her, he wouldn't make no open stir an' talk. He had a fancy as perhaps somethin' of her old trouble had took her off, an' he stuck to it in his mind as she'd come back an' tell him all. An' I dare say you'll say, "Why should he, in the name of all that's simple?" Well,

ma'am, he had a reason, an' that there reason held him up when nothin' else would. But it seemed as if all hope was to be tore from him. A cleanin' up the room one afternoon, he comes across a piece of half-burnt paper as has lodged in a corner, an' in pickin' it up somethin' catches his eye as strikes him blind an' weak an' sick — a few words writ in a fine, flourishin' hand, an' these was them : —

" — wasting your life, my sweet Polly, on a stupid fellow who has not even sense enough to see that you are making a sacrifice and breaking your innocent, foolish heart. Don't break mine, too — don't turn away from me as you did on that dreadful night. If you love me, trust me. Come to "—

That was all, for the rest was burnt ; but when he'd read it, Joe's hope was swept away complete. She'd been gettin' love-letters from another man, an' readin' them, an' keepin' them secret, an' now she was gone !

He set down, an' let the paper drop on the floor.

" I — didn't know," he says, " as them — was women's — ways. Lord help you, Polly, — an' me, — an' Lord be pitiful to It ! "

There's no use of makin' the story longer than can be helped, an' besides, words wouldn't tell what sufferin' that there little back room saw in the three next weeks. There's no knowin' what kept the poor chap from staggerin' in from his work some night an' fallin' heart-broke in death on his lonely hearth. He suffered an' strove an' bore, an'

yet kept his secret close. He neither eat nor slept, his face growed white an' haggard, an' his eyes holler. He kept away from the Bonnys, an' kept away from all as knowed him. Even the sight of the collection was too much for him. He'd set there by the ashes of the fire hour after hour at night, a-lookin' at the grayness, an' not carin' to stir.

"I didn't know," he'd say again an' again over slow to hisself an' the emptiness an' quiet, — "I didn't know — as them — was women's ways."

Just five weeks from the time as he'd come home an' found his wife gone, he was a-settin' this very way over the grate one evenin' at dusk, when he hears a key a-turnin' in the door gentle-like, an' he lifts his head to listen. "Who's that," he says, "as is tryin' to come in?"

But the next minute he starts up, a-knockin' the chair over back'ard, his heart a-beatin' loud enough to be heard, for the one as turned the key *was* in, an' had light feet, an' come an' pushed the room door open an' stood there a second. An' it was Polly, with a bundle in her arms. She didn't look guilty, bless you, though she were a little pale an' excited. She was even a-laughin', in a shy, happy, timid way, an' her eyes was wide an' shinin'.

But Joe, he weren't strong enough to bear it. He breaks out into a cry.

"Polly," says he, "is it because you're dead that you've come back to me?" An' he makes a step,

gropin' an' staggerin', an' would have fell if she hadn't run an' caught him, an' pushed him into a chair.

"Joe," she cries out, kneeling down before him, — "Joe, dear Joe, what's the matter? It's Polly, an'" — an' she puts her face against his vest in the old way — "an' you mustn't frighten me."

That, an' the touch of her hand brings him back, an' he knows in a second as he has her safe, an' then he catches her an' begins to hug her tight, too shook to say a word.

But she pulls back a bit, half frightened an' half joyful.

"Joe," she says, "didn't you think I was at the Bonnys'? Have you been anxious?" An' then, a-laughin' nervous-like, "You mustn't squeeze so, Joe — don't you see?"

An' she lays the bundle on his knee an' opens the shawl an' shows him what's in it.

"He's — he's only a little one," she says, a-laughin' an' cryin' true woman fashion, "but he grows every day, an' he's noticin' already."

Joe makes an effort an' just saves hisself from bustin' out in a sob as might have told her all — an' this time he folds 'em both up an' holds 'em, a-tryin' to stumble at a prayer in his mind.

"Polly," he says after a bit, "tell me all about it, for I don't understand how it is as it's come about."

But girl as she is, she sees as there's somethin behind, an' she gives him a long look.

"Joe," she says, "I've more to tell than just how this happened, an' when I lay quiet with little Joe on my arm, I made up my mind as the day I brought him home to you was the day as had come for you to hear it, an' so you shall; but first I must lay him down an' make the room warm."

Which she gets up an' does, an' won't let Joe do nothin' but watch her, an' while she's at it he sees her sweet young face a-workin', an' when everythin's done, an' the fire burnin' bright, an' the kettle on, an' the little fellow comfortable on her arm, she draws a little wooden stool up to his knees an' sits down on it, an' her face is a-workin' still.

"Not as I'm afraid to tell you now, Joe, though I've held it back so long; but sometimes I've thought as the day would never come when I could, an' now I'm so glad — so glad," she whispers.

An' then a-holdin' his hand an' the child's too, she tells him the whole story of what her secret was an' why she kept it one, an' as you may guess it was all about the man as Joe had seen her with.

The night she'd fainted in the street she'd found out his cruel heart for the first time, an' it had well-nigh broke her own. The people as she worked for had turned her off through hearin' of him, an' her own mother, as was a hard, strict woman, had believed the scandal and turned against her too. An' then when she had gone to him in her fear an' trouble he had struck her down with words as was worse than blows.

"But bein' so young, Joe, an' so weak," she says, "I couldn't forget him, an' it seemed as if I couldn't bear my life; an' I knowed that if he come back again it would be harder to turn away from him than ever. An' it was — an' when he follerred me an' tried me so as I knowed as I'd give up if there wasn't something to hold me strong. An' I asked you to save me that night, Joe, an' you said you would. Joe," she whispers, "don't hate me for bein' so near to sin and shame."

After a little while she tells him the rest.

"But even when he knowed I was a good man's wife he wouldn't let me rest. He tried to see me again an' again, an' wrote me letters an' besot me in every way, knowin' as I wasn't worthy of you, an' didn't love you as I ought. But the time come when he grew weaker an' you grew stronger, Joe. How could I live with you day after day an' see the contrast between you, an' not learn to love the man as was so patient an' true to me, an' despise him as only loved hisself an' was too selfish an' cruel to have either mercy or pity? So the day come when I knowed I needn't fear him nor myself no more, an' I told him so. It was then I told you I was goin' to be happy; an' Joe, dear, I was happy — particular lately. Do you believe me, Joe? — say as you do."

"Yes, Polly," says Joe. "Thank God!"

"Kiss me, then," she says, "an' kiss little Joe, an' then I'll tell you how the other come about."

He did it prompt, an' with a heavin' heart, an' then the other was soon told.

"I hadn't seen him for a long time when you went away," she tells him, "an' I thought I'd seen the last of him; but you hadn't been gone a week before I met him face to face in the street; an' that same night a letter come, an' through me bein' lonesome an' nervous-like, and seein' him so determined, it frightened me, an' I made up my mind I'd go to the Bonny's an' get heartened up a little before you come back. So I started all in a hurry as soon as I could get ready. But before I'd got more than half way to my journey's end, we had a accident, — not much of a one, for the trains as met each other wasn't goin' so fast but that they could be stopped in time to save much real harm bein' done, an' people was mostly badly shook an' frightened. But I fainted away, an' when I come to myself I was lyin' on a bed in a farmhouse near the line, an' the farmer's wife, as was a good soul, she was a-takin' care of me, an' says she, 'Where's your husband, my girl?' an' I says, 'I'm not sure I know, ma'am,' an' faints away again.

"Well, the next mornin' I was lyin' there still, but little Joe was on my arm, an' I had the strength to tell where I lived, an' how it was I didn't know where to send for you. An' the farmer's wife was like a mother to me, an' she cheers me up, an' says, 'Well, never mind. Bless us! what a joyful surprise it'll be to the man! Think of that!' An'

I did think of it until I made up my mind as I wouldn't send no word at all until I could come home myself; for, says I, 'He'll think I'm at the Bonnys', an' it'll save him bein' worried.' An' that was how it was. Joe," kind of hesitatin', "have you anythin' to tell *me?*"

She looks at him timid an' gentle, and he looks down at the fire.

"Not if you'd rather not, Joe," she says; "but I thought" —

Joe, he thinks a bit, an' then answers her grave an' slow: —

"Polly," says he, "I found a piece of that there letter. Will you forgive me, an' let it pass at that for little Joe's sake?"

She stoops down and kisses his hand, with tears in her eyes.

"Yes," she answers, "an' for yours too. You've more to forgive than me, Joe, — an' it was quite nat'ral."

An' she never asks him another question, but sets there sweet an' content, an' they both sets there almost too happy to speak; and there's such a look in her face as goes to Joe's heart, an' he breaks the quiet, at last, a-sayin': —

"Polly, I hope it aint no wrong in me a-thinkin' it, — for this aint no time for me to have none but the reverentes tand gratefulest humble heart, — but as you set there with the little fellow so peaceful on your breast, I can't help bein' 'minded of

the Mother as we see in the churches, an' as some prays to."

Well, mum, that's the whole story, an' somehow it's run out longer than I thought for; but there's nothin' more left to say, but that if you could see that there little Joe to-day he'd astonish you; for though but five year old, I'm blessed if he don't know every figger in the collection by name, an' is as familiar with Henry the Eighthses fam'ly as I am myself; an' says he to me only the other day, "Father" — at least — Well, mum, I suppose I may as well own up to it, now I've done, — though a nat'ral back'ardness made it easier for me to tell it the other way. But you're right in supposin' so; an' not to put too fine a point to it, the story *is* mine, — that there Joe bein' me, an' Polly my wife, an' that there collection Smethurstses.

ONE DAY AT ARLE.

ONE day at Arle — a tiny scattered fishing hamlet on the northwestern English coast — there stood at the door of one of the cottages near the shore a woman leaning against the lintel-post and looking out: a woman who would have been apt to attract a stranger's eye, too — a woman young and handsome. This was what a first glance would have taken in; a second would have been apt to teach more and leave a less pleasant impression. She was young enough to have been girlish, but she was not girlish in the least. Her tall, lithe, well-knit figure was braced against the door-post with a tense sort of strength; her handsome face was just at this time as dark and hard in expression as if she had been a woman with years of bitter life behind her; her handsome brows were knit, her lips were set; from head to foot she looked unyielding and stern of purpose.

And neither form nor face belied her. The earliest remembrances of the coast people concerning

Meg Lonas had not been over-pleasant ones. She had never been a favorite among them. The truth was they had half feared her, even as the silent, dogged, neglected child who used to wander up and down among the rocks and on the beach, working harder for her scant living than the oldest of them. She had never a word for them, and never satisfied their curiosity upon the subject of the treatment she received from the ill-conditioned old grandfather who was her only living relative, and this last peculiarity had rendered her more unpopular than anything else would have done. If she had answered their questions they might have pitied her; but as she chose to meet them with stubborn silence, they managed to show their dislike in many ways, until at last it became a settled point among them that the girl was an outcast in their midst. But even in those days she gave them back wrong for wrong and scorn for scorn; and as she grew older she grew stronger of will, less prone to forgive her many injuries and slights, and more prone to revenge them in an obstinate, bitter fashion. But as she grew older she grew handsomer too, and the fisher boys who had jeered at her in her childhood were anxious enough to gain her good-will.

The women flouted her still, and she defied them openly; the men found it wisest to be humble in their rough style, and her defiance of them was more scornful than her defiance of their mothers

and sisters. She would revenge herself upon them, and did, until at last she met a wooer who was tender enough, it seemed, to move her. At least so people said at first; but suddenly the lover disappeared, and two or three months later the whole community was electrified by her sudden marriage with a suitor whom she had been wont to treat worse than all the rest. How she treated him after the marriage nobody knew. She was more defiant and silent than ever, and gossipers gained nothing by asking questions. So at last she was left alone.

It was not the face of a tender wife waiting for a loving husband, the face that was turned toward the sea. If she had hated the man for whom she watched she could not have seemed more unbending. Ever since her visitor had left her (she had had a visitor during the morning) she had stood in the same place, even in the same position, without moving, and when at last the figure of her husband came slouching across the sands homeward she remained motionless still.

And surely his was not the face of a happy husband. Not a handsome face at its dull best, it was doubly unprepossessing then, as, pale and breathless, he passed the stern form in the doorway, his nervous, reluctant eyes avoiding hers.

"Yo'll find yo're dinner aw ready on th' table," she said to him as he passed in.

Everything was neat enough inside. The fire-

place was clean and bright, the table was set tidily, and the meal upon it was good enough in its way; but when the man entered he cast an unsteady, uncomprehending glance around, and when he had flung himself into a chair he did not attempt to touch the food, but dropped his face upon his arm on the table with a sound like a little groan.

She must have heard it, but she did not notice it even by a turn of her head, but stood erect and steadfast until he spoke to her. She might have been waiting for his words — perhaps she was.

"Tha canst come in an' say what tha has to say an' be done wi' it," he said at last, in a sullen, worn-out fashion.

She turned round then and faced him, harder to be met in her rigid mood than if she had been a tempest.

"Tha knows what I ha' getten to say," she answered, her tone strained and husky with repressed fierceness. "Aye! tha knows it well enough. I ha' not much need to tell thee owt. He comn here this morning an' he towd me aw I want to know about thee, Seth Lonas — an' more too."

"He comn to me," put in the man.

She advanced towards the table and struck it once with her hand.

"Tha'st towd me a power o' lies," she said. "Tha's lied to me fro' first to last to serve thy own eends, an' tha'st gained 'em — tha'st lied me away fro' th' man as wur aw th' world to me, but

th' time's comn now when thy day's o'er an' his is comn agen. Ah! thou bitter villain! Does ta mind how tha comn an' towd me Dan Morgan had gone to th' fair at Lake wi' that lass o' Barnegats? That wur a lie an' that wur th' beginnin'. Does ta mind how tha towd me as he made light o' me when th' lads an' lasses plagued him, an' threeped 'em down as he didna mean to marry no such like lass as me — him as wur ready to dee fur me? That wur a lie an' that wur th' eendin', as tha knew it would be, fur I spurned him fro' me th' very next day, an' wouldna listen when he tried to straighten' out. But he got at th' truth at last when he wur fur fro' here, an' he browt th' truth back to me to-day, an' theer's th' eend fur thee — husband or no."

The man lay with his head upon his arms until she had finished, and then he looked up all white and shaken and blind.

"Wilt ta listen if I speak to thee?" he asked.

"Aye," she answered, "listen to more lies!"

And she slipped down into a sitting posture on the stone door-step, and sat there, her great eyes staring out seaward, her hands lying loose upon her knee, and trembling.

There was something more in her mood than resentment. In this simple gesture she had broken down as she had never broken down in her life before. There was passionate grief in her face, a wild sort of despair, such as one gimht see in a

suddenly-wounded, untamed creature. Hers was not a fair nature. I am not telling the story of a gentle, true-souled woman — I am simply relating the incidents of one bitter day whose tragic close was the ending of a rough romance.

Her life had been a long battle against the world's scorn; she had been either on the offensive or the defensive from childhood to womanhood, and then she had caught one glimpse of light and warmth, clung to it yearningly for one brief hour, and lost it.

Only to-day she had learned that she had lost it through treachery. She had not dared to believe in her bliss, even during its fairest existence; and so, when light-hearted, handsome Dan Morgan's rival had worked against him with false stories and false proofs, her fierce pride had caught at them, and her revenge had been swift and sharp. But it had fallen back upon her own head now. This very morning handsome Dan had come back again to Arle, and earned his revenge, too, though he had only meant to clear himself when he told her what chance had brought to light. He had come back — her lover, the man who had conquered and sweetened her bitter nature as nothing else on earth had power to do — he had come back and found her what she was — the wife of a man for whom she had never cared, the wife of the man who had played them both false, and robbed her of the one poor gleam of joy she had known. She

had been hard and wild enough at first, but just now, when she slipped down upon the door-step with her back turned to the wretched man within — when it came upon her that, traitor as he was, she herself had given him the right to take her bright-faced lover's place, and usurp his tender power — when the fresh sea-breeze blew upon her face and stirred her hair, and the warm, rare sunshine touched her, even breeze and sunshine helped her to the end, so that she broke down into a sharp sob, as any other woman might have done, only that the repressed strength of her poor warped nature made it a sob sharper and deeper than another woman's would have been.

"Yo' mought ha' left me that!" she said. "Yo' mought ha' left it to me! There wur other women as would ha' done yo', there wur no other man on earth as would do me. Yo' knowed what my life had been, an' how it wur hand to hand betwixt other folk an' me. Yo' knowed how much I cared fur him an' what he wur to me. Yo' mought ha' let us be. I nivver harmed yo'. I wouldna harm yo' so sinful cruel now."

"Wilt ta listen?" he asked, laboring as if for breath.

"Aye," she answered him, "I'll listen, fur tha conna hurt me worser. Th' day fur that's past an' gone."

"Well," said he, "listen an' I'll try to tell yo'. I know it's no use, but I mun say a word or two

Happen yo' didna know I loved yo' aw' yo're life — happen yo' didna, but it's true. When yo' wur a little lass gatherin' sea-weed on th' sands I watched yo' when I wur afeared to speak — afeared lest yo'd gi' me a sharp answer, fur yo' wur ready enow wi' 'em, wench. I've watched yo' fur hours when I wur a great lubberly lad, an' when yo' gettin' to be a woman it wur th' same thing. I watched yo' an' did yo' many a turn as yo' knowed nowt about. When yo' wur searchin' fur drift to keep up th' fire after th' owd mon deed an' left yo' alone, happen yo' nivver guessed as it wur me as heaped little piles i' th' nooks o' th' rocks so as yo'd think 'at th' tide had left it theer — happen yo' did n't, but it wur true. I've stayed round th' old house many a neet, feared summat mought harm yo', an' yo' know yo' nivver gave me a good word, Meg. An' then Dan comn an' he made way wi' yo' as he made way wi' aw th' rest — men an' women an' children. He nivver worked an' waited as I did — he nivver thowt an' prayed as I did ; everything come easy wi' him — everything allus did come easy wi' him, an' when I seed him so light-hearted an' careless about what I wur cravin' it run me daft an' blind. Seemt like he couldna cling to it like I did, an' I begun to fight agen it, an' when I heerd about that lass o' Barnegats I towd yo', an' when I seen yo' believed what I didna believe mysen, it run me dafter yet, an' I put more to what he said, an' held back some, an' theer it wur an' theer it stands, an' if

I've earnt a curse, lass, I've getten it, fur — fur I thowt yo'd been learnin' to care fur me a bit sin' we wur wed, an' God knows I've tried to treat yo' fair an' kind i' my poor way. It wurna Dan Morgan's way, I know — his wur a better way than mine, th' sun shone on him somehow — but I've done my best an' truest sin'."

"Yo've done yo're worst," she said. "Th' worst yo' could do wur to part us, an' yo' did it. If yo'd been half a mon yo' wouldna ha' been content wi' a woman yo'd trapped with sayin' 'Aye,' an' who cared less for yo' than she did fur th' sand on th' sea-shore. What's what yo've done sin' to what yo' did afore? Yo' conna wipe that out and yo' conna mak' me forget. I hate yo', an' th' worse because I wur beginnin' to be content a bit. I hate mysen. I ought to ha' knowed" — wildly — "he would ha' knowed whether I wur true or false, poor chap — he would ha' knowed."

She rocked herself to and fro for a minute, wringing her hands in a passion of anguish worse than any words, but a minute later she turned on him all at once.

"All's o'er betwixt yo' an' me," she said with fierce heat; "do yo' know that? If yo' wur half a mon yo' would."

He sat up and stared at her humbly and stupidly.

"Eh?" he said at last.

"Theer's not a mon i' Arle as isna more to me

now than tha art," she said. "Some on 'em be honest, an' I conna say that o' thee. Tha canst get thee gone or I'll go myself. Tha knows't me well enow to know I'll ne'er forgie thee for what tha's done. Aye" — with the passionate hand-wringing again — "but that wunnot undo it."

He rose and came to her, trembling like a man with the ague.

"Yo' dunnot mean that theer, Meg," he said slowly. "You dunnot mean it word fur word. Think a bit."

"Aye, but I do," she answered him, setting her white teeth, "word fur word."

"Think again, wench." And this time he staggered and caught hold of the door-post. "Is theer nowt as'll go agen th' wrong? I've lived wi' thee nigh a year, an' I've loved thee twenty — is theer nowt fur me? Aye, lass, dunnot be too hard. Tha was allus harder than most womankind; try an' be a bit softer like to'rds th' mon as risked his soul because he wur a mon an' darena lose thee. Tha laid thy head on my shoulder last neet. Aye, lass — lass, think o' that fur one minnit."

Perhaps she did think of it, for surely she faltered a little — what woman would not have faltered at such a moment? — but the next, the memory of the sunny, half-boyish face she had clung to with so strong a love rushed back upon her and struck her to the heart. She remembered the days when her life had seemed so full that she had

feared her own bliss; she remembered the gallant speeches and light-hearted wiles, and all at once she cried out in a fierce impassioned voice: "I'll ne'er forgie thee," she said — "I'll ne'er forgie thee to th' last day o' my life. What fur should I? Tha's broke my heart, thou villain — tha's broke my heart." And the next minute she had pushed past him and rushed into the house.

For a minute or so after she was gone the man stood leaning against the door with a dazed look in his pale face. She meant what she said: he had known her long enough to understand that she never forgave — never forgot. Her unbroken will and stubborn strength had held her to enmities all her life, and he knew she was not to be won by such things as won other women. He knew she was harder than most women, but his dull nature could not teach him how bitter must have been the life that rendered her so. He had never thought of it — he did not think of it now. He was not blaming her, and he was scarcely blaming himself. He had tried to make her happy and had failed. There were two causes for the heavy passion of misery that was ruling him, but neither of them was remorse.

His treachery had betrayed him, and he had lost the woman he had loved and worked for. Soul and body were sluggish alike, but each had its dull pang of weight and wretchedness.

"I've come to th' eend now surely," he said, and, dropping into her seat, he hid his face.

As he sat there a choking lump rose in his throat with a sudden click, and in a minute or so more he was wiping away hot rolling tears with the back of his rough hand.

"I'm forsook somehow," he said — "aye, I'm forsook. I'm not th' soart o' chap to tak' up wi' th' world. She wur all th' world I cared fur, an' she'll ne'er forgie me, for she's a hard un — she is. Aye! but I wur fond o' her! I wonder what she'll do — I do wonder i' my soul what she's gettin' her mind on!"

It did not occur to him to call to her or go and see what she was doing. He had always stood in some dull awe of her, even when she had been kindest, and now it seemed that they were too far apart for any possibility of approach at reconciliation. So he sat and pondered heavily, the sea air blowing upon him fresh and sweet, the sun shining soft and warm upon the house, and the few common flowers in the strip of garden whose narrow shell walks and borders he had laid out for her himself with much clumsy planning and slow labor.

Then he got up and took his rough working-jacket over his arm.

"I mun go down to th' Mary Anne," he said, "an' work a bit, or we'll ne'er get her turned o'er afore th' tide comes in. That boat's a moit o' trouble." And he sighed heavily.

Half-way to the gate he stopped before a cluster of ground honeysuckle, and perhaps for the first

time in his life was conscious of a sudden curious admiration for them.

"She's powerful fond o' such loike bits o' things — posies an' such loike," he said. "Thems some as I planted to please her on th' very day as we were wed. I'll tak' one or two. She's main fond on 'em — fur such a hard un."

And when he went out he held in his hand two or three slender stems hung with the tiny pretty humble bells.

. . . . . .

He had these very bits of simple blossoms in his hand when he went down to where the Mary Anne lay on the beach for repairs. So his fellow-workmen said when they told the story afterwards, remembering even this trivial incident.

He was in a strange frame of mind, too, they noticed, silent and heavy and absent. He did not work well, but lagged over his labor, stopping every now and then to pass the back of his hand over his brow as if to rouse himself.

"Yo' look as if yo' an' th' missus had had a fallin' out an' yo'n getten th' worst o' th' bargain," one of his comrades said by way of rough jest.

They were fond of joking with him about his love for his handsome, taciturn wife. But he did not laugh this time as he usually did.

"Mind thy own tackle, lad," he said dully, "an' I'll mind mine."

From that time he worked steadily among them

until it was nearly time for the tide to rise. The boat they were repairing had been a difficult job to manage, as they could only work between tides, and now being hurried they lingered longer than usual. At the last minute they found it must be moved, and so were detained.

"Better leave her until th' tide ebbs," said one, but the rest were not of the same mind.

"Nay," they argued, "it'll be all to do o'er agen if we do that. Theer's plenty o' time if we look sharp enow. Heave again, lads."

Then it was that with the help of straining and tugging there came a little lurch, and then it was that as the Mary Anne slipped over on her side one of the workers slipped with her, slipped half underneath her with a cry, and lay on the sand, held down by the weight that rested on him.

With his cry there broke out half a dozen others, and the men rushed up to him with frightened faces.

"Are yo' hurt, Seth, lad?" they cried. "Are yo' crushed or owt?"

The poor fellow stirred a little and then looked up at them pale enough.

"Bruised a bit," he answered them, "an' sick a bit, but I dunnot think theer's any bones broke. Look sharp, chaps, an' heave her up. She's a moit o' weight on me."

They went to work again one and all, so relieved by his words that they were doubly strong, but after

toiling like giants for a while they were compelled to pause for breath. In falling the boat had so buried herself in the sand that she was harder to move than ever. It had seemed simple enough at first, but it was not so simple, after all. With all their efforts they had scarcely stirred her an inch, and their comrade's position interfered with almost every plan suggested. Then they tried again, but this time with less effect than before, through their fatigue. When they were obliged to pause they looked at each other questioningly, and more than one of them turned a trifle paler, and at last the wisest of them spoke out: —

"Lads," he said, "we conna do this oursens. Run for help, Jem Coulter, an' run wi' thy might, fur it wunnot be so long afore th' tide'll flow."

Up to this time the man on the sands had lain with closed eyes and set teeth, but when he heard this his eyes opened and he looked up.

"Eh!" he said, in that blind, stupid fashion. "What's that theer tha's sayin' Mester?"

"Th' tide," blundered the speaker. "I wur tellin' him to look sharp, that's aw."

The poor fellow moved restlessly.

"Aye! aye!" he said. "Look sharp — he mun do that. I didna think o' th' tide." And he shut his eyes again with a faint groan.

They strove while the messenger was gone; and they strove when he returned with assistance; they strove with might and main, until not a man among

them had the strength of a child, and the boldest of them were blanching with a fearful, furtive excitement none dared to show. A crowd had gathered round by this time — men willing and anxious to help, women suggesting new ideas and comforting the wounded man in rough, earnest style; children clinging to their mothers' gowns and looking on terror-stricken. Suddenly, in the midst of one of their mightiest efforts, a sharp childish voice piped out from the edge of an anxious group a brief warning that struck terror to every heart that beat among them.

"Eh! Mesters!" it said, "th' tide's creepin' up a bit."

The men looked round with throbbing pulses, the women looked also, and one of the younger ones broke into a low cry. "Lord, ha' mercy!" she said; "it'll sweep around th' Bend afore long, an' — an'" — and she ended with a terror in her voice which told its own tale without other words.

The truth forced itself upon them all then. Women began to shriek and men to pray, but, strange to say, the man whose life was at stake lay silent, with ashen lips, about which the muscles were tensely drawn.

His dull eyes searched every group in a dead despair that was yet a passion, in all its stillness.

"How long will it be," he asked slowly at last — "th' tide? Twenty minutes?"

"Happen so," was the answer. "An', lad, lad! we conna help thee. We'n tried our best, lad" — with sobs even from the uncouth fellow who spoke. "Theer is na one on us but 'ud leave a limb behind to save thee, but theer is na time — theer is na" —

One deep groan and he lay still again — quite still. God knows what weight of mortal agony and desperate terror crushed him in that dead, helpless pause.

Then his eyes opened as before.

"I've thowt o' deein'," he said with a catch of his breath. "I've thowt o' deein', an' I've wondered how it wur an' what it felt like. I never thowt o' deein' like this here." Another pause and then —

"Which o' yo' lads 'll tell my missus?"

"Ay! poor chap, poor chap!" wailed the women. "Who on 'em will?"

"Howd tha noise, wenches," he said hoarsely. "Yo' daze me. Theer is na time to bring her here. I'd ha' liked to ha' said a word to her. I'd ha' liked to ha' said one word; Jem Coulter" — raising his voice — "canst tha say it fur me?"

"Aye," cried the man, choking as he spoke, "surely, surely." And he knelt down.

"Tell her 'at if it wur bad enow — this here — it wur not so bad as it mought ha' been — fur *me*. I mought ha' fun it worser. Tell her I'd like to ha' said a word if I could — but I couldna. I'd like to

ha' heard her say one word, as happen she would ha' said if she'd been here, an' tell her 'at if she had ha' said it th' tide mought ha' comn an' welcome — but she didna, an' theer it stands." And the sob that burst from his breast was like the sob of a death-stricken child. "Happen" — he said next — "happen one o' yo' women-foak con say a bit o' a prayer — yo're not so fur fro' safe sand but yo' can reach it — happen one o' yo' ha' a word or two as yo' could say — such like as yo' teach yo're babbies."

Among these was one who had — thank God, thank God! and so, amid wails and weeping, rough men and little children alike knelt with uncovered heads and hidden eyes while this one woman faltered the prayer that was a prayer for a dying man; and when it was ended, and all rose glancing fearfully at the white line of creeping foam, this dying man for whom they had prayed lay upon his death-bed of sand the quietest of them all — quiet with a strange calm.

"Bring me my jacket," he said, "an' lay it o'er my face. Theer's a bit o' a posie in th' button-hole. I getten it out o' th' missus's garden when I comn away. I'd like to howld it i' my hand if it's theer yet."

And as the long line of white came creeping onward they hurriedly did as he told them — laid the rough garment over his face, and gave him the humble dying flowers to hold, and having done this

and lingered to the last moment, one after the other dropped away with awe-stricken souls until the last was gone. And under the arch of sunny sky the little shining waves ran up the beach, chasing each other over the glittering sand, catching at shells and sea-weed, toying with them for a moment, and then leaving them, rippling and curling and whispering, but creeping — creeping — creeping.

. . . . . .

They gave his message to the woman he had loved with all the desperate strength of his dull, yet unchanging nature; and when the man who gave it to her saw her wild, white face and hard-set lips, he blundered upon some dim guess as to what that single word might have been, but the sharpest of them never knew the stubborn anguish that, following and growing day by day, crushed her fierce will and shook her heart. She was as hard as ever, they thought; but they were none of them the men or women to guess at the long dormant instinct of womanhood and remorse that the tragedy of this one day of her life had awakened. She had said she would never forgive him, and perhaps her very strength made it long before she did; but surely some subtle chord was touched by those heavy last words, for when, months later, her first love came back, faithful and tender, with his old tale to tell, she would not listen.

"Nay, lad," she said, "I amna a feather to blow wi' th' wind. I've had my share o' trouble wi' men

foak, an' I ha' no mind to try again. Him as lies i' th' churchyard loved me i' his way — men foak's way is apt to be a poor un — an' I'm wore out wi' life. Dunnot come here courtin' — tak' a better woman."

But yet, there are those who say that the time will come when he will not plead in vain.

ESMERALDA.

TO begin, I am a Frenchman, a teacher of languages, and a poor man, — necessarily a poor man, as the great world would say, or I should not be a teacher of languages, and my wife a copyist of great pictures, selling her copies at small prices. In our own eyes, it is true, we are not so poor — my Clélie and I. Looking back upon our past we congratulate ourselves upon our prosperous condition. There was a time when we were poorer than we are now, and were not together, and were, moreover, in London instead of in Paris. These were indeed calamities: to be poor, to teach, to live apart, not even knowing each other — and in England! In England we spent years; we instructed imbeciles of all grades; we were chilled by east winds, and tortured by influenza; we vainly strove to conciliate the appalling English; we were discouraged and desolate. But this, thank *le bon Dieu!* is past. We are united; we have our little apartment — upon the fifth floor, it is true, but still not

hopelessly far from the Champs Élysées. Clélie paints her little pictures, or copies those of some greater artist, and finds sale for them. She is not a great artist herself, and is charmingly conscious of the fact.

"At fifteen," she says, "I regretted that I was not a genius; at five and twenty, I rejoice that I made the discovery so early, and so gave myself time to become grateful for the small gifts bestowed upon me. Why should I eat out my heart with envy? Is it not possible that I might be a less clever woman than I am, and a less lucky one?"

On my part I have my pupils, — French pupils who take lessons in English, German, or Italian; English or American pupils who generally learn French, and, upon the whole, I do not suffer from lack of patrons.

It is my habit when Clélie is at work upon a copy in one of the great galleries to accompany her to the scene of her labor in the morning and call for her at noon, and, in accordance with this habit, I made my way to the Louvre at midday upon one occasion three years ago.

I found my wife busy at her easel in the *Grande Galerie*, and when I approached her and laid my hand upon her shoulder, as was my wont, she looked up with a smile and spoke to me in a cautious undertone.

"I am glad," she said, "that you are not ten minutes later. Look at those extraordinary people."

She still leaned back in her chair and looked up at me, but made, at the same time, one of those indescribable movements of the head which a clever woman can render so significant.

This slight gesture directed me at once to the extraordinary people to whom she referred.

"Are they not truly wonderful?" she asked.

There were two of them, evidently father and daughter, and they sat side by side upon a seat placed in an archway, and regarded hopelessly one of the finest works in the gallery. The father was a person undersized and elderly. His face was tanned and seamed, as if with years of rough outdoor labor; the effect produced upon him by his clothes was plainly one of actual suffering, both physical and mental. His stiff hands refused to meet the efforts of his gloves to fit them; his body shrank from his garments; if he had not been pathetic, he would have been ridiculous. But he was pathetic. It was evident he was not so attired of his own free will; that only a patient nature, inured by long custom to discomfort, sustained him; that he was in the gallery under protest; that he did not understand the paintings, and that they perplexed — overwhelmed him.

The daughter it is almost impossible to describe, and yet I must attempt to describe her. She had a slender and pretty figure; there were slight marks of the sun on her face also, and, as in her father's case, the richness of her dress was set at

defiance by a strong element of incongruousness. She had black hair and gray eyes, and she sat with folded hands staring at the picture before her in dumb uninterestedness.

Clélie had taken up her brush again, and was touching up her work here and there.

"They have been here two hours," she said. "They are waiting for some one. At first they tried to look about them as others did. They wandered from seat to seat, and sat down, and looked as you see them doing now. What do you think of them? To what nation should you ascribe them?"

"They are not French," I answered. "And they are not English."

"If she were English," said Clélie, "the girl would be more conscious of herself, and of what we might possibly be saying. She is only conscious that she is out of place and miserable. She does not care for us at all. I have never seen Americans like them before, but I am convinced that they are Americans."

She laid aside her working materials and proceeded to draw on her gloves.

"We will go and look at that 'Tentation de St. Antoine' of Teniers," she said, "and we may hear them speak. I confess I am devoured by an anxiety to hear them speak."

Accordingly, a few moments later an amiable young couple stood before "La Tentation," regarding it with absorbed and critical glances.

But the father and daughter did not seem to see us. They looked disconsolately about them, or at the picture before which they sat. Finally, however, we were rewarded by hearing them speak to each other. The father addressed the young lady slowly and deliberately, and with an accent which, but for my long residence in England and familiarity with some forms of its *patois*, I should find it impossible to transcribe.

"Esmeraldy," he said, "your ma's a long time acomin'."

"Yes," answered the girl, with the same accent, and in a voice wholly listless and melancholy, "she's a long time."

Clélie favored me with one of her rapid side glances. The study of character is her grand passion, and her special weakness is a fancy for the singular and incongruous. I have seen her stand in silence, and regard with positive interest one of her former patronesses who was overwhelming her with contumelious violence, seeming entirely unconscious of all else but that the woman was of a species novel to her, and therefore worthy of delicate observation.

"It is as I said," she whispered. "They are Americans, but of an order entirely new."

Almost the next instant she touched my arm.

"Here is the mother!" she exclaimed. "She is coming this way. See!"

A woman advanced rapidly toward our part of

the gallery, — a small, angry woman, with an ungraceful figure, and a keen brown eye. She began to speak aloud while still several feet distant from the waiting couple.

"Come along," she said. "I've found a place at last, though I've been all the morning at it, — and the woman who keeps the door speaks English.

"They call 'em," remarked the husband, meekly rising, "*con-ser-ges*. I wonder why."

The girl rose also, still with her hopeless, abstracted air, and followed the mother, who led the way to the door. Seeing her move forward, my wife uttered an admiring exclamation.

"She is more beautiful than I thought," she said. "She holds herself marvelously. She moves with the freedom of some fine wild creature."

And, as the party disappeared from view, her regret at losing them drew from her a sigh. She discussed them with characteristic enthusiasm all the way home. She even concocted a very probable little romance. One would always imagine so many things concerning Americans. They were so extraordinary a people; they acquired wealth by such peculiar means; their country was so immense; their resources were so remarkable. These persons, for instance, were evidently persons of wealth, and as plainly had risen from the people. The mother was not quite so wholly untaught as the other two, but she was more objectionable.

"One can bear with the large simplicity of utter

ignorance," said my fair philosopher. "One frequently finds it gentle and unworldly, but the other is odious because it is always aggressive and narrow."

She had taken a strong feminine dislike to Madame la Mère.

"She makes her family miserable," she said. "She drags them from place to place. Possibly there is a lover, — more possibly than not. The girl's eyes wore a peculiar look, — as if they searched for something far away."

She had scarcely concluded her charming little harangue when we reached our destination; but, as we passed through the entrance, she paused to speak to the curly-headed child of the *concierge* whose mother held him by the hand.

"We shall have new arrivals to-morrow," said the good woman, who was always ready for friendly gossip. "The apartment upon the first floor," and she nodded to me significantly, and with good-natured encouragement. "Perhaps you may get pupils," she added. "They are Americans, and speak only English, and there is a young lady, Madame says."

"Americans!" exclaimed Clélie, with sudden interest.

"Americans," answered the *concierge*. "It was Madame who came. *Mon Dieu!* it was wonderful! So rich and so — so" — filling up the blank by a shrug of deep meaning.

"It cannot have been long since they were — peasants," her voice dropping into a cautious whisper.

"Why not our friends of the Louvre?" said Clélie as we went on up-stairs.

"Why not?" I replied. "It is very possible."

The next day there arrived at the house numberless trunks of large dimensions, superintended by the small angry woman and a maid. An hour later came a carriage, from whose door emerged the young lady and her father. Both looked pale and fagged; both were led up-stairs in the midst of voluble comments and commands by the mother; and both, entering the apartment, seemed swallowed up by it, as we saw and heard nothing further of them. Clélie was indignant.

"It is plain that the mother overwhelms them," she said. "A girl of that age should speak and be interested in any novelty. This one would be if she were not wretched. And the poor little husband!" —

"My dear," I remarked, "you are a feminine Bayard. You engage yourself with such ardor in everybody's wrongs."

When I returned from my afternoon's work a few days later, I found Clélie again excited. She had been summoned to the first floor by Madame.

"I went into the room," said Clélie, "and found the mother and daughter together. Mademoiselle, who stood by the fire, had evidently been weeping.

Madame was in an abrupt and angry mood. She wasted no words. 'I want you to give her lessons,' she said, making an ungraceful gesture in the direction of her daughter. 'What do you charge a lesson?' And on my telling her, she engaged me at once. 'It's a great deal, but I guess I can pay as well as other people,' she remarked."

A few of the lessons were given down-stairs, and then Clélie preferred a request to Madame.

"If you will permit Mademoiselle to come to my room, you will confer a favor upon me," she said.

Fortunately, her request was granted, and so I used afterward to come home and find Mademoiselle Esmeralda in our little *salon* at work disconsolately and tremulously. She found it difficult to hold her pencil in the correct manner, and one morning she let it drop, and burst into tears.

"Don't you see I'll never do it!" she answered, miserably. "Don't you see I couldn't, even if my heart was in it, and it aint at all!"

She held out her little hands piteously for Clélie to look at. They were well enough shaped, and would have been pretty if they had not been robbed of their youthful suppleness by labor.

"I've been used to work," she said, "rough work all my life, and my hands aint like yours."

"But you must not be discouraged, Mademoiselle," said Clélie gently. "Time" —

"Time," interposed the girl, with a frightened

look in her pretty gray eyes. "That's what I can't bear to think of — the time that's to come."

This was the first of many outbursts of confidence. Afterward she related to Clélie, with the greatest naïveté, the whole history of the family affairs.

They had been the possessors of some barren mountain lands in North Carolina, and her description of their former life was wonderful indeed to the ears of the Parisian. She herself had been brought up with marvelous simplicity and hardihood, barely learning to read and write, and in absolute ignorance of society. A year ago iron had been discovered upon their property, and the result had been wealth and misery for father and daughter. The mother, who had some vague fancies of the attractions of the great outside world, was ambitious and restless. Monsieur, who was a mild and accommodating person, could only give way before her stronger will.

"She always had her way with us," said Mademoiselle Esmeralda, scratching nervously upon the paper before her with her pencil, at this part of the relation. "We did not want to leave home, neither me nor father, and father said more than I ever heard him say before at one time. 'Mother,' says he, 'let me an' Esmeraldy stay at home, an' you go an' enjoy your tower. You've had more schoolin' an' you'll be more at home than we should. You're useder to city ways, havin' lived

in 'Lizabethville.' But it only vexed her. People in town had been talking to her about traveling and letting me learn things, and she'd set her mind on it."

She was very simple and unsophisticated. To the memory of her former truly singular life she clung wiith unshaken fidelity. She recurred to it constantly. The novelty and luxury of her new existence seemed to have no attractions for her. One thing even my Clélie found incomprehensible, while she fancied she understood the rest — she did not appear to be moved to pleasure even by our beloved Paris.

"It is a true *maladie du pays*," Clélie remarked to me. "*And that is not all.*"

Nor was it all. One day the whole truth was told amid a flood of tears.

"I — I was going to be married," cried the poor child. "I was to have been married the week the ore was found. I was — all ready, and mother — mother shut right down on us."

Clélie glanced at me in amazed questioning.

"It is a kind of *argot* which belongs only to Americans," I answered in an undertone. "The alliance was broken off."

"*Ciel!*" exclaimed my Clélie between her small shut teeth. "The woman is a fiend!"

She was wholly absorbed in her study of this unworldly and untaught nature. She was full of sympathy for its trials and tenderness, and for its pain.

Even the girl's peculiarities of speech were full of interest to her. She made serious and intelligent efforts to understand them, as if she studied a new language.

"It is not common *argot*," she said. "It has its subtleties. One continually finds somewhere an original idea — sometimes even a *bon mot*, which startles one by its pointedness. As you say, however, it belongs only to the Americans and their remarkable country. A French mind can only arrive at its climaxes through a grave and occasionally tedious research, which would weary most persons, but which, however, does not weary me."

The confidence of Mademoiselle Esmeralda was easily won. She became attached to us both, and particularly to Clélie. When her mother was absent or occupied, she stole up-stairs to our apartment and spent with us the moments of leisure chance afforded her. She liked our rooms, she told my wife, because they were small, and our society, because we were "clever," which we discovered afterward meant "amiable." But she was always pale and out of spirits. She would sit before our fire silent and abstracted.

"You must not mind if I don't talk," she would say. "I can't; and it seems to help me to get to sit and think about things. Mother won't let me do it down-stairs."

We became also familiar with the father. One day I met him upon the staircase, and to my amaze-

ment he stopped as if he wished to address me. I raised my hat and bade him good-morning. On his part he drew forth a large handkerchief and began to rub the palms of his hands with awkward timidity.

"How-dy?" he said.

I confess that at the moment I was covered with confusion. I who was a teacher of English, and flattered myself that I wrote and spoke it fluently did not understand. Immediately, however, it flashed across my mind that the word was a species of salutation. (Which I finally discovered to be the case.) I bowed again and thanked him, hazarding the reply that my health was excellent, and an inquiry as to the state of Madame's. He rubbed his hands still more nervously, and answered me in the slow and deliberate manner I had observed at the Louvre.

"Thank ye," he said, "she's doin' tol'able well, is mother — as well as common. And she's a-enjoyin' herself, too. I wish we was all" —

But there he checked himself and glanced hastily about him.

Then he began again: —

"Esmeraldy," he said, — "Esmeraldy thinks a heap on you. She takes a sight of comfort out of Mis' Des—— I can't call your name, but I mean your wife."

"Madame Desmarres," I replied, "is rejoiced indeed to have won the friendship of Mademoiselle."

"Yes," he proceeded, "she takes a sight of comfort in you ans all. An' she needs comfort, does Esmeraldy."

There ensued a slight pause which somewhat embarrassed me, for at every pause he regarded me with an air of meek and hesitant appeal.

"She's a little down-sperrited is Esmeraldy," he said. "An'," adding this suddenly in a subdued and fearful tone, "so am I."

Having said this he seemed to feel that he had overstepped a barrier. He seized the lapel of my coat and held me prisoner, pouring forth his confessions with a faith in my interest by which I was at once amazed and touched.

"You see it's this way," he said, — "it's this way, Mister. We're home folks, me an' Esmeraldy, an' we're a long way from home, an' it sorter seems like we didn't get no useder to it than we was at first. We're not like mother. Mother she was raised in a town, — she was raised in 'Lizabethville, — an' she allers took to town ways; but me an' Esmeraldy, we was raised in the mountains, right under the shadder of old Bald, an' town goes hard with us. Seems like we're allers a thinkin' of North Callina. An' mother she gits outed, which is likely. She says we'd ought to fit ourselves fur our higher spear, an' I dessay we'd ought, — but you see it goes sorter hard with us. An' Esmeraldy she has her trouble an' I can't help a sympathizin' with her, fur young folks will be young folks; an' I was young

folks once myself. Once — once I sot a heap o' store by mother. So you see how it is."

"It is very sad, Monsieur," I answered with gravity. Singular as it may appear, this was not so laughable to me as it might seem. It was so apparent that he did not anticipate ridicule. And my Clélie's interest in these people also rendered them sacred in my eyes.

"Yes," he returned, "that's so; an' sometimes it's wuss than you'd think — when mother's outed. An' that's why I'm glad as Mis' Dimar an' Esmeraldy is such friends."

It struck me at this moment that he had some request to make of me. He grasped the lapel of my coat somewhat more tightly as if requiring additional support, and finally bent forward and addressed me with caution, "Do you think as Mis' Dimar would mind it ef now an' then I was to step in fur Esmeraldy, an' set a little — just in a kinder neighborin' way. Esmeraldy, she says you're so sosherble. And I haint been sosherble with no one fur — fur a right smart spell. And it seems like I kinder hanker arter it. You've no idea, Mister, how lonesome a man can git when he hankers to be sosherble an' haint no one to be sosherble with. Mother, she says, 'Go out on the Champs Elizy and promenard,' and I've done it; but some ways it don't reach the spot. I don't seem to get sosherble with no one I've spoke to — may be through us speakin' different languages,

an' not comin' to a understandin'. I've tried it loud an' I've tried it low an' encouragen', but some ways we never seemed to get on. An' ef Mis' Dimar wouldn't take no exceptions at me a-droppin' in, I feel as ef I should be sorter uplifted — if she'd only allow it once a week or even fewer."

"Monsieur," I replied with warmth, "I beg you will consider our *salon* at your disposal, not once a week but at all times, and Madame Desmarres would certainly join me in the invitation if she were upon the spot."

He released the lapel of my coat and grasped my hand, shaking it with fervor.

"Now, that's clever, that is," he said. "An' its friendly, an' I'm obligated to ye."

Since he appeared to have nothing further to say we went down-stairs together. At the door we parted.

"I'm a-goin'," he remarked, "to the Champs Elizy to promenard. Where are you a-goin'?"

"To the Boulevard Haussmann, Monsieur, to give a lesson," I returned. "I will wish you good-morning."

"Good-mornin'," he answered. "*Bong*" — reflecting deeply for a moment — "*Bong jore.* I'm a tryin' to learn it, you see, with a view to bein' more sosherbler. *Bong jore.*" And thus took his departure.

After this we saw him frequently. In fact it became his habit to follow Mademoiselle Esmeralda

in all her visits to our apartment. A few minutes after her arrival we usually heard a timid knock upon the outer door, which proved to emanate from Monsieur, who always entered with a laborious "*Bong jore*," and always slipped deprecatingly into the least comfortable chair near the fire, hurriedly concealing his hat beneath it.

In him also my Clélie became much interested. On my own part I could not cease to admire the fine feeling and delicate tact she continually exhibited in her manner toward him. In time he even appeared to lose something of his first embarrassment and discomfort, though he was always inclined to a reverent silence in her presence.

"He don't say much, don't father," said Mademoiselle Esmeralda, with tears in her pretty eyes. "He's like me, but you don't know what comfort he's taking when he sits and listens and stirs his chocolate round and round without drinking it. He doesn't drink it because he aint used to it; but he likes to have it when we do, because he says it makes him feel sosherble. He's trying to learn to drink it too — he practices every day a little at a time. He was powerful afraid at first that you'd take exceptions to him doing nothing but stir it round; but I told him I knew you wouldn't for you wasn't that kind."

"I find him," said Clélie to me, "inexpressibly mournful, — even though he excites one to smiles upon all occasions. Is it not mournful that his

very suffering should be absurd. *Mon Dieu!* he does not *wear* his clothes — he bears them about with him — he simply *carries* them."

It was about this time that Mademoiselle Esmeralda was rendered doubly unhappy. Since their residence in Paris Madame had been industriously occupied in making efforts to enter society. She had struggled violently and indefatigably. She was at once persistent and ambitious. She had used every means that lay in her power, and, most of all, she had used her money. Naturally, she had found people upon the outskirts of good circles who would accept her with her money. Consequently, she had obtained acquaintances of a class, and was bold enough to employ them as stepping-stones. At all events, she began to receive invitations, and to discover opportunities to pay visits, and to take her daughter with her. Accordingly, Mademoiselle Esmeralda was placed upon exhibition. She was dressed by experienced *artistes*. She was forced from her seclusion, and obliged to drive, and call, and promenade.

Her condition was pitiable. While all this was torture to her inexperience and timidity, her fear of her mother rendered her wholly submissive. Each day brought with it some new trial. She was admired for many reasons, — by some for her wealth, of which all had heard rumors; by others for her freshness and beauty. The silence and sensitiveness which arose from shyness, and her ignorance

of all social rules, were called naïveté and modesty, and people who abhorred her mother, not unfrequently were charmed with her, and consequently Madame found her also an instrument of some consequence.

In her determination to overcome all obstacles, Madame even condescended to apply to my wife, whose influence over Mademoiselle she was clever enough not to undervalue.

"I want you to talk to Mademoiselle," she said. "She thinks a great deal of you, and I want you to give her some good advice. You know what society is, and you know that she ought to be proud of her advantages, and not make a fool of herself. Many a girl would be glad enough of what she has before her. She's got money, and she's got chances, and I don't begrudge her anything. She can spend all she likes on clothes and things, and I'll take her anywhere if she'll behave herself. They wear me out — her and her father. It's her father that's ruined her, and her living as she's done. Her father never knew anything, and he's made a pet of her, and got her into his way of thinking. It's ridiculous how little ambition they have, and she might marry as well as any girl. There's a marquis that's quite in love with her at this moment, and she's as afraid of him as death, and cries if I even mention him, though he's a nice enough man, if he is a bit elderly. Now, I want you to reason with her."

This Clélie told me afterward.

"And upon going away," she ended, "she turned round toward me, setting her face into an indescribable expression of hardness and obstinacy. 'I want her to understand,' she said, 'that she's cut off forever from anything that's happened before. There's the Atlantic Ocean and many a mile of land between her and North Carolina, and so she may as well give that up.'"

Two or three days after this Mademoiselle came to our apartment in great grief. She had left Madame in a violent ill-temper. They had received invitations to a ball at which they were to meet the marquis. Madame had been elated, and the discovery of Mademoiselle's misery and trepidation had roused her indignation. There had been a painful scene, and Mademoiselle had been overwhelmed as usual.

She knelt before the fire and wept despairingly.

"I'd rather die than go," she said. "I can't stand it. I can't get used to it. The light, and the noise, and the talk, hurts me, and I don't know what I am doing. And people stare at me, and I make mistakes, and I'm not fit for it — and — and — I'd rather be dead fifty thousand times than let that man come near me. I hate him, and I'm afraid of him, and I wish I was dead."

At this juncture came the timid summons upon the door, and the father entered with a disturbed and subdued air. He did not conceal his hat, but

held it in his hands, and turned it round and round in an agitated manner as he seated himself beside his daughter.

"Esmeraldy," he said, "don't you take it so hard, honey. Mother, she's kinder outed, and she's not at herself rightly. Don't you never mind. Mother she means well, but — but she's got a sorter curious way of showin' it. She's got a high sperrit, an' we'd ought to 'low fur it, and not take it so much to heart. Mis' Dimar here knows how high-sperrited people is sometimes, I dessay, — an' mother she's got a powerful high sperrit."

But the poor child only wept more hopelessly. It was not only the cruelty of her mother which oppressed her, it was the wound she bore in her heart.

Clélie's eyes filled with tears as she regarded her.

The father was also more broken in spirit than he wished it to appear. His weather-beaten face assumed an expression of deep melancholy which at last betrayed itself in an evidently inadvertent speech.

"I wish — I wish," he faltered. "Lord! I'd give a heap to see Wash now. I'd give a heap to see him, Esmeraldy."

It was as if the words were the last straw. The girl turned toward him and flung herself upon his breast with a passionate cry.

"Oh, father!" she sobbed, "we sha'n't never see him again — never — never! nor the mountains, nor the people that cared for us. We've lost it all,

and we can't get it back, — and we haven't a soul that's near to us, — and we're all alone, — you and me, father, and Wash — Wash, he thinks we don't care."

I must confess to a momentary spasm of alarm, her grief was so wild and overwhelming. One hand was flung about her father's neck, and the other pressed itself against her side, as if her heart was breaking.

Clélie bent down and lifted her up, consoling her tenderly.

"Mademoiselle," she said, "do not despair. *Le Bon Dieu* will surely have pity."

The father drew forth the large linen handkerchief, and unfolding it slowly, applied it to his eyes.

"Yes, Esmeraldy," he said; "don't let us give out, — at least don't you give out. It doesn't matter fur me, Esmeraldy, because, you see, I must hold on to mother, as I swore not to go back on; but you're young an' likely, Esmeraldy, an' don't you give out yet, fur the Lord's sake."

But she did not cease weeping until she had wholly fatigued herself, and by this time there arrived a message from Madame, who required her presence down-stairs. Monsieur was somewhat alarmed, and rose precipitately, but Mademoiselle was too full of despair to admit of fear.

"It's only the dress-maker," she said. "You can stay where you are, father, and she won't

guess we've been together, and it'll be better for us both."

And accordingly she obeyed the summons alone.

Great were the preparations made by Madame for the entertainment. My wife, to whom she displayed the costumes and jewels she had purchased, was aroused to an admiration truly feminine.

She had the discretion to trust to the taste of the *artistes*, and had restrained them in nothing. Consequently, all that was to be desired in the appearance of Mademoiselle Esmeralda upon the eventful evening was happiness. With her mother's permission, she came to our room to display herself, Monsieur following her with an air of awe and admiration commingled. Her costume was rich and exquisite, and her beauty beyond criticism; but as she stood in the centre of our little *salon* to be looked at, she presented an appearance to move one's heart. The pretty young face which had by this time lost its slight traces of the sun had also lost some of its bloom; the slight figure was not so round nor so erect as it had been, and moved with less of spirit and girlishness.

It appeared that Monsieur observed this also, for he stood apart regarding her with evident depression, and occasionally used his handkerchief with a violence that was evidently meant to conceal some secret emotion.

"You're not so peart as you was, Esmeraldy," he remarked, tremulously; "not as peart by a right

smart, and what with that, and what with your fixin's, Wash — I mean the home-folks," hastily — "they'd hardly know ye."

He followed her down-stairs mournfully when she took her departure, and Clélie and myself being left alone interested ourselves in various speculations concerning them, as was our habit.

"This Monsieur Wash," remarked Clélie, "is clearly the lover. Poor child! how passionately she regrets him, — and thousands of miles lie between them — thousands of miles!"

It was not long after this that, on my way down-stairs to make a trifling purchase, I met with something approaching an adventure. It so chanced that, as I descended the staircase of the second floor, the door of the first floor apartment was thrown open, and from it issued Mademoiselle Esmeralda and her mother on their way to their waiting carriage. My interest in the appearance of Mademoiselle in her white robes and sparkling jewels so absorbed me that I inadvertently brushed against a figure which stood in the shadow regarding them also. Turning at once to apologize, I found myself confronting a young man, — tall, powerful, but with a sad and haggard face, and attired in a strange and homely dress which had a foreign look.

"Monsieur!" I exclaimed, "a thousand pardons. I was so unlucky as not to see you."

But he did not seem to hear. He remained silent, gazing fixedly at the ladies until they had

disappeared, and then, on my addressing him again, he awakened, as it were, with a start.

"It doesn't matter," he answered, in a heavy bewildered voice and in English, and turning back made his way slowly up the stairs.

But even the utterance of this brief sentence had betrayed to my practiced ear a peculiar accent — an accent which, strange to say, bore a likeness to that of our friends down-stairs, and which caused me to stop a moment at the lodge of the *concierge*, and ask her a question or so.

"Have we a new occupant upon the fifth floor?" I inquired. "A person who speaks English?"

She answered me with a dubious expression.

"You must mean the strange young man upon the sixth," she said. "He is a new one and speaks English. Indeed, he does not speak anything else, or even understand a word. *Mon Dieu!* the trials one encounters with such persons, — endeavoring to comprehend, poor creatures, and failing always, — and this one is worse than the rest and looks more wretched — as if he had not a friend in the world."

"What is his name?" I asked.

"How can one remember their names? — it is worse than impossible. This one is frightful. But he has no letters, thank Heaven. If there should arrive one with an impossible name upon it, I should take it to him and run the risk."

Naturally, Clélie, to whom I related the incident,

was much interested. But it was some time before either of us saw the hero of it again, though both of us confessed to having been upon the watch for him. The *concierge* could only tell us that he lived a secluded life — rarely leaving his room in the daytime, and seeming to be very poor.

"He does not work and eats next to nothing," she said. "Late at night he occasionally carries up a loaf, and once he treated himself to a cup of *bouillon* from the restaurant at the corner — but it was only once, poor young man. He is at least very gentle and well-conducted.

So it was not to be wondered at that we did not see him. Clélie mentioned him to her young friend, but Mademoiselle's interest in him was only faint and ephemeral. She had not the spirit to rouse herself to any strong emotion.

"I dare say he's an American," she said. "There are plenty of Americans in Paris, but none of them seem a bit nearer to me than if they were French. They are all rich and fine, and they all like the life here better than the life at home. This is the first poor one I have heard of."

Each day brought fresh unhappiness to her. Madame was inexorable. She spent a fortune upon *toilette* for her, and insisted upon dragging her from place to place, and wearying her with gayeties from which her sad young heart shrank. Each afternoon their equipage was to be seen upon the Champs Élysées, and each evening it stood before

the door waiting to bear them to some place of festivity.

Mademoiselle's *bête noir*, the marquis, who was a debilitated *roué* in search of a fortune, attached himself to them upon all occasions.

"Bah!" said Clélie with contempt, "she amazes one by her imbecility — this woman. Truly, one would imagine that her vulgar sharpness would teach her that his object is to use her as a tool, and that having gained Mademoiselle's fortune, he will treat them with brutality and derision."

But she did not seem to see — possibly she fancied that having obtained him for a son-in-law, she would be bold and clever enough to outwit and control him. Consequently, he was encouraged and fawned upon, and Mademoiselle grew thin and pale and large-eyed, and wore continually an expression of secret terror.

Only in her visits to our fifth floor did she dare to give way to her grief, and truly at such times both my Clélie and I were greatly affected. Upon one occasion indeed she filled us both with alarm.

"Do you know what I shall do?" she said, stopping suddenly in the midst of her weeping. "I'll bear it as long as I can, and then I'll put an end to it. There's — there's always the Seine left, and I've laid awake and thought of it many a night. Father and me saw a man taken out of it one day, and the people said he was a Tyrolean, and drowned himself because he was so poor and lonely — and — and so far from home."

Upon the very morning she made this speech I saw again our friend of the sixth floor. In going down-stairs I came upon him, sitting upon one of the steps as if exhausted, and when he turned his face upward, its pallor and haggardness startled me. His tall form was wasted, his eyes were hollow, the peculiarities I had before observed were doubly marked — he was even emaciated.

"Monsieur," I said in English, "you appear indisposed. You have been ill. Allow me to assist you to your room."

"No, thank you," he answered. "It's only weakness. I — I sorter give out. Don't trouble yourself. I shall get over it directly."

Something in his face, which was a very young and well-looking one, forced me to leave him in silence, merely bowing as I did so. I felt instinctively that to remain would be to give him additional pain.

As I passed the room of the *concierge*, however, the excellent woman beckoned to me to approach her.

"Did you see the young man?" she inquired rather anxiously. "He has shown himself this morning for the first time in three days. There is something wrong. It is my impression that he suffers want — that he is starving himself to death!"

Her rosy countenance absolutely paled as she uttered these last words, retreating a pace from me and touching my arm with her fore-finger.

"He has carried up even less bread than usual during the last few weeks," she added, "and there has been no *bouillon* whatever. A young man cannot live only on dry bread, and too little of that. He will perish; and apart from the inhumanity of the thing, it will be unpleasant for the other *locataires*."

I wasted no time in returning to Clélie, having indeed some hope that I might find the poor fellow still occupying his former position upon the staircase. But in this I met with disappointment: he was gone and I could only relate to my wife what I had heard, and trust to her discretion. As I had expected, she was deeply moved.

"It is terrible," she said. "And it is also a delicate and difficult matter to manage. But what can one do? There is only one thing — I who am a woman, and have suffered privation myself, may venture."

Accordingly, she took her departure for the floor above. I heard her light summons upon the door of one of the rooms, but heard no reply. At last, however, the door was opened gently, and with a hesitance that led me to imagine that it was Clélie herself who had pushed it open, and immediately afterward I was sure that she had uttered an alarmed exclamation. I stepped out upon the landing and called to her in a subdued tone, —

"Clélie," I said, "did I hear you speak?"

"Yes," she returned from within the room. "Come at once, and bring with you some brandy."

In the shortest possible time I had joined her in the room, which was bare, cold, and unfurnished — a mere garret, in fact, containing nothing but a miserable bedstead. Upon the floor, near the window, knelt Clélie, supporting with her knee and arm the figure of the young man she had come to visit.

"Quick with the brandy," she exclaimed. "This may be a faint, but it looks like death." She had found the door partially open, and receiving no answer to her knock, had pushed it farther ajar, and caught a glimpse of the fallen figure, and hurried to its assistance.

To be as brief as possible, we both remained at the young man's side during the whole of the night. As the *concierge* had said, he was perishing from inanition, and the physician we called in assured us that only the most constant attention would save his life.

"Monsieur," Clélie explained to him upon the first occasion upon which he opened his eyes, "you are ill and alone, and we wish to befriend you." And he was too weak to require from her anything more definite.

Physically he was a person to admire. In health his muscular power must have been immense. He possessed the frame of a young giant, and yet there was in his face a look of innocence and inexperience amazing even when one recollected his youth.

"It is the look," said Clélie, regarding him attentively, — "the look one sees in the faces of Monsieur and his daughter down-stairs; the look of a person who has lived a simple life, and who knows absolutely nothing of the world."

It is possible that this may have prepared the reader for the *dénoûment* which followed; but singular as it may appear, it did not prepare either Clélie or myself — perhaps because we *had* seen the world, and having learned to view it in a practical light, were not prepared to encounter suddenly a romance almost unparalleled.

The next morning I was compelled to go out to give my lessons as usual, and left Clélie with our patient. On my return, my wife, hearing my footsteps, came out and met me upon the landing. She was moved by the strongest emotion and much excited; her cheeks were pale and her eyes shone.

"Do not go in yet," she said, "I have something to tell you. It is almost incredible; but — but it is — the lover!"

For a moment we remained silent — standing looking at each other. To me it seemed incredible indeed.

"He could not give her up," Clélie went on, "until he was sure she wished to discard him. The mother had employed all her ingenuity to force him to believe that such was the case, but he could not rest until he had seen his betrothed face to face. So he followed her, — poor, inexperi-

enced, and miserable, — and when at last he saw her at a distance, the luxury with which she was surrounded caused his heart to fail him, and he gave way to despair."

I accompanied her into the room, and heard the rest from his own lips. He gathered together all his small savings, and made his journey in the cheapest possible way, — in the steerage of the vessel, and in third-class carriages, — so that he might have some trifle left to subsist upon.

"I've a little farm," he said, "and there's a house on it, but I wouldn't sell that. If she cared to go, it was all I had to take her to, an' I'd worked hard to buy it. I'd worked hard, early and late, always thinking that some day we'd begin life there together — Esmeraldy and me."

"Since neither sea, nor land, nor cruelty, could separate them," said Clélie to me during the day, "it is not I who will help to hold them apart."

So when Mademoiselle came for her lesson that afternoon, it was Clélie's task to break the news to her, — to tell her that neither sea nor land lay between herself and her lover, and that he was faithful still.

She received the information as she might have received a blow, — staggering backward, and whitening, and losing her breath; but almost immediately afterward she uttered a sad cry of disbelief and anguish.

"No, no," she said, "it — it isn't true! I won't

believe it — I mustn't. There's half the world between us. Oh, don't try to make me believe it, — when it can't be true!"

"Come with me," replied Clélie.

Never — never in my life has it been my fate to see, before or since, a sight so touching as the meeting of these two young hearts. When the door of the cold, bare room opened, and Mademoiselle Esmeralda entered, the lover held out his weak arms with a sob, — a sob of rapture, and yet terrible to hear.

"I thought you'd gone back on me, Esmeraldy," he cried. "I thought you'd gone back on me."

Clélie and I turned away and left them as the girl fell upon her knees at his side.

The effect produced upon the father — who had followed Mademoiselle as usual, and whom we found patiently seated upon the bottom step of the flight of stairs, awaiting our arrival — was almost indescribable.

He sank back upon his seat with a gasp, clutching at his hat with both hands. He also disbelieved.

"Wash!" he exclaimed weakly. "Lord, no! Lord, no! Not Wash! Wash, he's in North Callina. Lord, no!"

"He is up-stairs," returned Clélie, "and Mademoiselle is with him."

During the recovery of Monsieur Wash, though

but little was said upon the subject, it is my opinion that the minds of each of our number pointed only toward one course in the future.

In Mademoiselle's demeanor there appeared a certain air of new courage and determination, though she was still pallid and anxious. It was as if she had passed a climax and had gained strength. Monsieur, the father, was alternately nervous and dejected, or in feverishly high spirits. Occasionally he sat for some time without speaking, merely gazing into the fire with a hand upon each knee; and it was one evening, after a more than usually prolonged silence of this description, that he finally took upon himself the burden which lay upon us unitedly.

"Esmeraldy," he remarked, tremulously, and with manifest trepidation, — "Esmeraldy, I've been thinkin' — it's time — we broke it to mother."

The girl lost color, but she lifted her head steadily.

"Yes, father," she answered, "it's time."

"Yes," he echoed, rubbing his knees slowly, "it's time; an', Esmeraldy, it's a thing to — to sorter set a man back."

"Yes, father," she answered again.

"Yes," as before, though his voice broke somewhat; "an' I dessay you know how it'll be, Esmeraldy, — that you'll have to choose betwixt mother and Wash."

She sat by her lover, and for answer she dropped her face upon his hand with a sob.

"An' — an' you've chose Wash, Esmeraldy?"

"Yes, father."

He hesitated a moment, and then took his hat from its place of concealment and rose.

"It's nat'ral," he said, "an' it's right. I wouldn't want it no other way. An' you mustn't mind, Esmeraldy, it's bein' kinder rough on me, as can't go back on mother, havin' swore to cherish her till death do us part. You've allus been a good gal to me, an' we've thought a heap on each other, an' I reckon it can allers be the same way, even though we're sep'rated, fur it's nat'ral you should have chose Wash, an' — an' I wouldn't have it no other way, Esmeraldy. Now I'll go an' have it out with mother."

We were all sufficiently unprepared for the announcement to be startled by it. Mademoiselle Esmeralda, who was weeping bitterly, half sprang to her feet.

"To-night!" she said. "Oh, father!"

"Yes," he replied; "I've been thinking over it, an' I don't see no other way, an' it may as well be to-night as any other time."

After leaving us he was absent for about an hour. When he returned, there were traces in his appearance of the storm through which he had passed. His hands trembled with agitation; he even looked weakened as he sank into his chair. We regarded him with commiseration.

"It's over," he half whispered, "an' it was even

rougher than I thought it would be. She was terrible outed, was mother. I reckon I never see her so outed before. She jest raged and tore. It was most more than I could stand, Esmeraldy," and he dropped his head upon his hands for support. "Seemed like it was the Markis as laid heaviest upon her," he proceeded. "She was terrible sot on the Markis, an' every time she think of him, she'd just rear — she'd just rear. I never stood up agen mother afore, an' I hope I sha'n't never have it to do again in my time. I'm kinder wore out."

Little by little we learned much of what had passed, though he evidently withheld the most for the sake of Mademoiselle, and it was some time before he broke the news to her that her mother's doors were closed against her.

"I think you'll find it pleasanter a-stoppin' here," he said, "if Mis' Dimar'll board ye until — the time fur startin' home. Her sperrit was so up that she said she didn't aim to see you no more, an' you know how she is, Esmeraldy, when her sperrit's up."

The girl went and clung around his neck, kneeling at his side, and shedding tears.

"Oh, father!" she cried, "you've bore a great deal for me; you've bore more than any one knows, and all for me."

He looked rather grave, as he shook his head at the fire.

"That's so, Esmeraldy," he replied; "but we ailers seemed nigh to each other, somehow, and

when it come to the wust, I was bound to kinder make a stand fur you, as I couldn't have made fur myself. I couldn't have done it fur myself. Lord, no!"

So Mademoiselle remained with us, and Clélie assisted her to prepare her simple outfit, and in the evening the tall young lover came into our apartment and sat looking on, which aspect of affairs, I will confess, was entirely new to Clélie, and yet did not displease her.

"Their candor moves me," she said. "He openly regards her with adoration. At parting she accompanies him to the door, and he embraces her tenderly, and yet one is not repelled. It is the love of the lost Arcadia — serious and innocent."

Finally, we went with them one morning to the American Chapel in the Rue de Berri, and they were united in our presence and that of Monsieur, who was indescribably affected.

After the completion of the ceremony, he presented Monsieur Wash with a package.

"It's papers as I've had drawd up fur Esmeraldy," he said. "It'll start you well out in the world, an' after me and mother's gone, there's no one but you and her to have rest. The Lord — may the Lord bless ye!"

We accompanied them to Havre, and did not leave them until the last moment. Monsieur was strangely excited, and clung to the hands of his daughter and son-in-law, talking fast and nervously,

and pouring out messages to be delivered to his distant friends.

"Tell 'em I'd like powerful well to see 'em all, an' I'd have come only — only things was kinder onconvenient. Sometime, perhaps" —

But here he was obliged to clear his throat, as his voice had become extremely husky. And, having done this, he added in an undertone: —

"You see, Esmeraldy, I couldn't, because of mother, as I've swore not to go back on. Wash, he wouldn't go back on you, however high your sperrit was, an' I can't go back on mother."

The figures of the young couple standing at the side, Monsieur Wash holding his wife to his breast with one strong arm, were the last we saw as the ship moved slowly away.

"It is obscurity to which they are returning," I said, half unconsciously.

"It is love," said Clélie.

The father, who had been standing apart, came back to us, replacing in his pocket his handkerchief.

"They are young an' likely, you see," said Monsieur, "an' life before them, an' it's nat'ral as she should have chose Wash, as was young too, an' sot on her. Lord, it's nat'ral, an' I wouldn't have it no otherways."

MÈRE GIRAUD'S LITTLE DAUGHTER.

"PRUT!" said Annot, her sabots clattering loudly on the brick floor as she moved more rapidly in her wrath. "Prut! Madame Giraud, indeed! There was a time, and it was but two years ago, that she was but plain Mère Giraud, and no better than the rest of us; and it seems to me, neighbors, that it is not well to show pride because one has the luck to be favored by fortune. Where, forsooth, would our 'Madame' Giraud stand if luck had not given her a daughter pretty enough to win a rich husband?"

"True, indeed!" echoed two of the gossips who were her admiring listeners. "True, beyond doubt. Where, indeed?"

But the third, a comely, fresh-skinned matron, who leaned against the door, and knitted a stout gray stocking with fast-clashing needles, did not acquiesce so readily.

"Well, well, neighbors," she said, "for my part, I do not see so much to complain of. Mère Giraud

— she is still Mère Giraud to me — is as honest and kindly a soul as ever. It is not she who has called herself Madame Giraud; it is others who are foolish enough to fancy that good luck must change one's old ways. If she had had the wish to be a grand personage, would she not have left our village before this and have joined Madame Legrand in Paris. On the contrary, however, she remains in her cottage, and is as good a neighbor as ever, even though she is fond of talking of the carriages and jewels of Madame Legrand and her establishment on the Boulevard Malesherbes. In fact, I ask you, who of us would not rejoice also to be the mother of a daughter whose fortune had been so good?"

"That also is true," commented the amiable couple, nodding their white-capped heads with a sagacious air. "True, without doubt."

But Annot replied with a contemptuous shrug of her shoulders: —

"Wait until Madame Giraud is invited to visit the Boulevard Malesherbes," she said. "We have not heard that this has happened yet."

"She would not go if she were, at least not to remain. Her heart has grown to the old place she bore her children in, and she has herself said to me most sensibly: 'Laure is young, and will learn easily the ways of the great world; I am old, and cannot; I am better at home among my neighbors.' Doubtless, however, in course of time she will pay

Madame Legrand a visit at her home in Paris, or at the château which Monsieur Legrand of course possesses, as the rich and aristocratic always do."

"Doubtless!" said Annot, grimly; "doubtless."

Honest Jeanne Tallot passed the sneer by, and went on with stout gravity of demeanor: —

"There is only one thing for which I somewhat blamed Mère Giraud, and that is that I think she has scarcely done her duty toward Valentin. He disappointed her by being an ugly lad instead of a pretty girl, and she had not patience with him. Laure was the favorite. Whatever Laure did was right, and it was not so with the other, though I myself know that Valentin was a good lad, and tender-hearted."

"Once," put in a white cap, "I saw her beat him severely because he fell with the little girl in his arms and scratched her cheek, and it was not his fault. His foot slipped upon a stone. He was carrying the child carefully and tenderly enough. You are right in calling him a good lad, neighbor Tallot. He was a good lad, — Valentin Giraud, — and fond of his mother, notwithstanding that she was not fond of him."

"Yes," added her companion; "but it is a truth that he was a great contrast to the girl. *Mon Dieu!* his long limbs and awkward body, his great sad eyes and ugly face! While Laure, — was she not tall and slender and white, like a lily in a garden?

And her voice was like the ringing of silver, and her eyes so soft and large. As an infant, she reminded one of the little Jésu as one sees him in the churches. No wonder that Mère Giraud fretted at the difference between the two. And Valentin was her first, and what mother does not look for great things in her first? We cannot help feeling that something must come of one's own charms if one has any, and Mère Giraud was a handsome bride. An ugly bantling seems to offer one a sort of insult, particularly at first, when one is young and vain."

"There was no more beautiful young girl than Laure Giraud at sixteen," said Jeanne Tallot.

"And none more useless," said Annot loudly. "Give me a young girl who is industrious and honest. My Margot is better provided for than Laure Giraud was before her marriage; but her hands are not white, nor is her waist but a span around. She has too much work to do. She is not a tall, white, swaying creature who is too good to churn and tend the creatures who give her food. I have heard it said that Laure would have worked if her mother had permitted it, but I don't believe it. She had not a working look. Mademoiselle Laure was too good for the labor of humble people; she must go to Paris and learn a fine, delicate trade."

"But good came of it," put in Jeanne Tallot. "It proved all the better for her."

"Let her mother thank the Virgin, then," cried

Annot, contemptuously. "It might not have proved the better; it might have proved the worse; evil might have come of it instead of good. Who among us has not heard of such things? Did not Marie Gautier go to Paris too?"

"Ah, poor little one, indeed!" sighed the white caps.

"And in two years," added Annot, "*her* mother died of a broken heart."

"But," said cheerful Jeanne, somewhat dryly, "Laure's mother is not dead yet, so let us congratulate ourselves that to go to Paris has brought luck to one of our number at least, and let us deal charitably with Mère Giraud, who certainly means well, and is only naturally proud of her daughter's grandeur. For my part, I can afford to rejoice with her."

She rolled up her stout stocking into a ball, and stuck her needles through it, nodding at the three women.

"I promised I would drop in and spend a few minutes with her this morning," she said; "so I will bid you good-day," and she stepped across the threshold and trudged off in the sunshine, her wooden shoes sounding bravely on the path.

It was only a little place, — St. Croix, as we shall call it for want of a better name, — a little village of one street, and of many vines, and roses, and orchards, and of much gossip. Simple people inhabited it, — simple, ignorant folk, who knew

one another, and discussed one another's faults and grape-crops with equal frankness, worked hard, lived frugally, confessed regularly, and slept well. Devout people, and ignorant, who believed that the little shrines they erected in their vineyards brought blessings upon their grapes, and who knew nothing of the great world beyond, and spoke of Paris with awe, and even a shade of doubt. Living the same lives generation after generation, tilling the same crops, and praying before the same stone altar in the small, quaint church, it is not to be wondered at that when a change occurred to any one of their number, it was regarded as a sort of social era. There were those in St. Croix who had known Mère Giraud's grandfather, a slow-spoken, kindly old peasant, who had drunk his *vin ordinaire*, and smoked his pipe with the poorest; and there was not one who did not well know Mère Giraud herself, and who had not watched the growth of the little Laure, who had bloomed into a beauty not unlike the beauty of the white Provence roses which climbed over and around her mother's cottage door. "Mère Giraud's little daughter," she had been called, even after she grew into the wonderfully tall and wonderfully fair creature she became before she left the village, accompanying her brother Valentin to Paris.

"*Ma foi!*" said the men, "but she is truly a beauty, Mère Giraud's little daughter!"

"She should be well looked to," said the wiseacres, — "Mère Giraud's little daughter."

"There is one we must always give way before," said the best-natured among the girls, "and that one is Mère Giraud's little daughter."

The old *Curé* of the parish took interest in her, and gave her lessons, and, as Mère Giraud would have held her strictly to them, even if she had not been tractable and studious by nature, she was better educated and more gently trained than her companions. The fact was, however, that she had not many companions. Some element in her grace and beauty seemed to separate her from the rest of her class. Village sports and festivities had little attraction for her, and, upon the whole, she seemed out of place among them. Her stature, her fair, still face, and her slow, quiet movements, suggested rather embarrassingly to the humble feasters the presence of some young princess far above them.

"*Pouf!*" said a sharp-tongued belle one day, "I have no patience with her. She is so tall, this Laure, that one must be forever looking up to her, and I, for one, do not care to be forever looking up."

The hint of refined pride in her demeanor was Mère Giraud's greatest glory.

"She is not like the rest, my Laure," she would say to her son. "One can see it in the way in which she holds her head. She has the quiet, grave air of a great personage."

There were many who wondered that Valentin showed no jealousy or distaste at hearing his sis-

ter's praises sounded so frequently to his own detriment. There was no praise for him. The poor, fond mother's heart was too full of Laure. Her son had been a bitter disappointment to her, and, to her mind, was fitted for nothing but to make himself an adoring slave to his sister's beauty; and this, the gentle, generous fellow certainly was. He was always ready to serve her; always affectionate, always faithful; and Mère Giraud, who was blind to, or careless of, all his loving, constant labor for her own comfort, deigned to see that he did his duty toward Laure.

"He has at least the sense to appreciate her as far as he is able," she said.

So when Valentin, who had a talent for engraving, was discovered by some one who understood his genius, and could make use of it, and was offered a place in the great, gay city, Mère Giraud formed an ambitious plan. He should take Laure and find her a position also; she had the fingers of a fair magician, and could embroider marvelously. So she trusted Laure to him, and the two bade farewell to St. Croix and departed together. A month passed, and then there came a letter containing good news. Valentin was doing well, and Laure also. She had found a place in a great family where she was to embroider and wait upon a young lady. They were rich people, and were kind, and paid her well, and she was happy.

"When they first saw her, they were astonished,"

wrote the simple, tender Valentin. "I went with her to present herself. My employer had recommended her. There is a son who is past his youth, and who has evidently seen the world. He is aristocratic and fair, and slightly bald, but extremely handsome still. He sat holding a newspaper in his long, white fingers, and when we entered, he raised his eyes above it and looked at Laure, and I heard him exclaim under his breath, '*Mon Dieu!*' as if her beauty fairly startled him."

When the *Curé*, to whom the proud mother showed the letter, read this part, he did not seem as rejoiced as Mère Giraud had expected. On the contrary, he looked a little grave, and rubbed his forehead.

"Ah, ah!" he said; "there lies the danger."

"Danger!" exclaimed Mère Giraud, starting.

He turned, and regarded her with a rather hesitant air, as if he were at once puzzled and fearful, — puzzled by her simplicity, and fearful of grieving her unnecessarily.

"Valentin is a good lad," he said. "Valentin will be watchful, — though perhaps he is too good to suspect evil."

Mère Giraud put her hand to her heart.

"You are not afraid?" she said, quite proudly, beginning at last to comprehend. "You are not afraid of evil to Laure?"

"No, no, no," he answered; "surely not."

He said no more then, but he always asked to

see the letters, and read them with great care, sometimes over and over again. They came very regularly for six or seven months, and then there was a gap of a few weeks, and then came a strange, almost incomprehensible, letter from Valentin, containing news which almost caused Mère Giraud's heart to burst with joy and gratitude. Laure was married, and had made such a marriage as could scarcely have been dreamed of. A rich aristocrat, who had visited her employers, had fallen in love with her, and married her. He had no family to restrain him, and her beauty had won him completely from the first hour. He had carried her away with him to make a prolonged tour. The family with whom she had lived had been lavish in their gifts and kindness, but they had left Paris also and were voyaging. The name of Laure's bridegroom was Legrand, and there came messages from Laure, and inclosed was a handsome present of money.

Mère Giraud was overwhelmed with joy. Before three hours had passed, all St. Croix knew the marvelous news. She went from house to house showing the letter and the money, and it was not until night that she cooled down sufficiently to labor through a long epistle to Valentin.

It was a year before Laure returned to Paris, and during that time she wrote but seldom; but Valentin wrote often, and answered all his mother's questions, though not as fluently, nor with so many

words as she often wished. Laure was rich, and beautiful as ever; her husband adored her, and showered gifts and luxuries upon her; she had equipages and jewels; she wore velvet and satin and lace every day; she was a great lady, and had a house like a palace. Laure herself did not say so much. In her secret heart, Mère Giraud often longed for more, but she was a discreet and far-seeing woman.

"What would you?" she said. "She must drive out in her equipage, and she must dress and receive great people, and I am not so blind a mother as not to see that she will have many things to learn. She has not time to write long letters, — and see how she cares for me, — money, see you, by every letter, and a silk dress and lace cap she herself has chosen in the Boulevard Capucines. And I must care for myself, and furnish the cottage prettily, and keep a servant. Her wealth and great fortune have not rendered her undutiful, — my Laure."

So she talked of Madame Legrand, and so all St. Croix talked of Madame Legrand, and some, of course, were envious and prophesied that the end had not come yet, and Mère Giraud would find herself forgotten some fine day; and others rejoiced with her, and congratulated themselves that they knew so aristocratic a person as Madame Legrand.

Jeanne Tallot was of those who sympathized with her in all warm-heartedness and candor.

With her knitting in her hand ready for action, and with friendly unceremoniousness, she presented herself at the cottage door one morning, nodding and speaking before she had crossed the threshold.

"Good-day, neighbor Giraud. Any letters from Laure this morning?"

Mère Giraud, who sat before the window under the swinging cage of her bird, looked up with an air a little more serious than usual.

"Ah!" she said, "I am glad it is you, Jeanne. I have been wishing to see you."

Jeanne seated herself, smiling.

"Then," said she, "it is well I came."

But immediately she noticed the absent look of her friend, and commented upon it.

"You do not look at your best this morning," she said. "How does it occur?"

"I am thinking," said Mère Giraud with some importance of manner, — "I am thinking of going to Paris."

"To Paris!"

"I am anxious," shaking her head seriously. "I had last night a bad dream. I wish to see Laure."

Then she turned and looked at Jeanne almost wistfully.

"It is a long time since I have seen her," she said.

"Yes," answered Jeanne in a little doubt; "but Paris is a long way off."

"Yes," said Mère Giraud; "but it appears that all at once I realize how long it is since I have seen my child. I am getting old, you see. I was not very young when she was born, and, as one grows older, one becomes more uneasy and obstinate in one's fancies. This morning I feel that I must see my Laure. My heart yearns for her, and" — hastily — "she will undoubtedly be rejoiced to see me. She has often said that she wished she might lay her head upon my breast again."

It seemed that she was resolved upon the journey. She was in a singular, uneasy mood, and restless beyond measure. She who had never been twenty miles from St. Croix had made up her mind to leave it at once and confront all the terrors of a journey to Paris, — for there were terrors in such a journey to the mind of a simple peasant who had so far traveled but in one groove. She would not even wait to consult *Monsieur le Curé*, who was unfortunately absent. Jeanne discovered to her astonishment that she had already made her small preparations, had packed her best garments in a little wooden box, laying the silk gown and lace cap at the top that they might be in readiness.

"I will not interfere at all, and I shall not remain long," she said. "Only long enough to see my Laure, and spend a few days with her quietly. It is not Paris I care for, or the great sights; it is that I must see my child."

St. Croix was fairly bewildered at the news it heard the next day. Mère Giraud had gone to Paris to visit Madame Legrand — had actually gone, sending her little servant home, and shutting up her small, trim cottage.

"Let us hope that Madame Legrand will receive her as she expects to be received," said Annot. "For my part I should have preferred to remain in St. Croix. Only yesterday Jeanne Tallot told us that she had no intention of going."

"She will see wonderful things," said the more simple and amiable. "It is possible that she may be invited to the Tuileries, and without doubt she will drive to the Bois de Boulogne in Madame Legrand's carriage, with servants in livery to attend her. My uncle's sister's son, who is a *valet de place* in a great family, tells us that the aristocracy drive up and down the Champs Élysées every afternoon, and the sight is magnificent."

But Mère Giraud did not look forward to such splendors as these. "I shall see my Laure as a great lady," she said to herself. "I shall hold her white hands and kiss her cheeks."

The roar of vehicles, and the rush and crowd and bustle bewildered her; the brightness and the rolling wheels dazzled her old eyes, but she held herself bravely. People to whom she spoke smiled at her *patois* and her innocent questions, but she did not care.

She found a *fiacre* which took her to her destina-

tion ; and when, after she had paid the driver, he left her, she entered the wide doors with a beating heart, the blood rising on her cheek, and glowing through the withered skin.

"Madame Legrand," she said a little proudly to the *concierge*, and the woman stared at her as she led her up the staircase. She was so eager that she scarcely saw the beauty around her, — the thick, soft carpets, the carved balustrades, the superb lamps. But when they stopped before a door she touched the *concierge* upon the arm.

"Do not say my name," she said. "I am her mother."

The woman stared at her more than ever.

"It is not my place to announce you," she said. "I only came up because I thought you would not find the way."

She could not have told why it was or how it happened, but when at last she was ushered into the *salon* a strange sense of oppression fell upon her. The room was long and lofty, and so shadowed by the heavy curtains falling across the windows that it was almost dark.

For a few seconds she saw nobody, and then all at once some one rose from a reclining chair at the farther end of the apartment and advanced a few steps toward her — a tall and stately figure, moving slowly.

"Who ?" — she heard a cold, soft voice say, and then came a sharp cry, and Laure's white

hands were thrown out in a strange, desperate gesture, and she stopped and stood like a statue of stone. "Mother — mother — mother!" she repeated again and again, as if some indescribable pain shook her.

If she had been beautiful before, now she was more beautiful still. She was even taller than ever, — she was like a queen. Her long robe was of delicate gray velvet, and her hair and throat and wrists were bound with pearls and gold. She was so lovely and so stately that for a moment Mère Giraud was half awed, but the next it was as if her strong mother heart broke loose.

"My Laure!" she cried out. "Yes, it is I, my child — it is I, Laure;" and she almost fell upon her knees as she embraced her, trembling for very ecstasy.

But Laure scarcely spoke. She was white and cold, and at last she gasped forth three words.

"Where is Valentin?"

But Mère Giraud did not know. It was not Valentin she cared to see. Valentin could wait, since she had her Laure. She sat down beside her in one of the velvet chairs, and she held the fair hand in her own. It was covered with jewels, but she did not notice them; her affection only told her that it was cold and tremulous.

"You are not well, Laure?" she said. "It was well that my dream warned me to come. Something is wrong."

"I am quite well," said Laure. "I do not suffer at all."

She was so silent that if Mère Giraud had not had so much to say she would have been troubled; as it was, however, she was content to pour forth her affectionate speeches one after another without waiting to be answered.

"Where is Monsieur Legrand?" she ventured at last.

"He is," said Laure, in a hesitant voice, — "he is in Normandy."

"Shall I not see him?" asked Mère Giraud.

"I am afraid not, unless your visit is a long one. He will be absent for some months."

She did not speak with any warmth. It was as if she did not care to speak of him at all, — as if the mention of him even embarrassed her a little.

Mère Giraud felt a secret misgiving.

"I shall not stay long," she said; "but I could not remain away. I wished so eagerly to see you, and know that you were happy. You are happy, my Laure?"

Laure turned toward her and gave her a long look — a look which seemed unconsciously to ask her a question.

"Happy!" she answered slowly and deliberately, "I suppose so. Yes."

Mère Giraud caressed her hand again and again. "Yes," she said, "it must be so. The good are always happy; and you, my Laure, have always

been dutiful and virtuous, and consequently you are rewarded. You have never caused me a grief, and now, thank the good God, you are prosperous." She looked at her almost adoringly, and at last touched the soft thick gray velvet of her drapery with reverence. "Do you wear such things as this every day?" she asked.

"Yes," Laure answered, "every day."

"Ah!" sighed the happy mother. "How Monsieur Legrand must adore you!"

At length she found time to ask a few questions concerning Valentin.

"I know that he is well and as prosperous as one could expect him to be; but I hope"— bridling a little with great seriousness — "I hope he conducts himself in such a manner as to cause you no embarrassment, though naturally you do not see him often."

"No," was the answer, — they did not see him often.

"Well, well," began Mère Giraud, becoming lenient in her great happiness, "he is not a bad lad — Valentin. He means well"—

But here she stopped, — Laure checked her with a swift, impassioned movement.

"He is what we cannot understand," she said in a hushed, strained voice. "He is a saint. He has no thought for himself. His whole life is a sacrifice. It is not I you should adore — it is Valentin."

"Valentin!" echoed Mère Giraud.

It quite bewildered her, the mere thought of adoring Valentin.

"My child," she said when she recovered herself, "it is your good heart which says this."

The same night Valentin came. Laure went out into the antechamber to meet him, and each stood and looked at the other with pale face and anguished eyes. Valentin's eyes were hollow and sunken as if with some great sorrow, and his large awkward frame seemed wasted. But there was no reproach mingled with the indescribable sadness of his gaze.

"Your note came to me," he said. "Our mother" —

"She is in there," said Laure in a low, hurried, shaken voice, and she pointed to the *salon*. "She has come to embrace me, — to make sure that I am happy. Ah, my God!" and she covered her deathly face with her hands.

Valentin did not approach her. He could only stand still and look on. One thought filled his mind.

"We have no time to weep, Laure," he said gently. "We must go on as we have begun. Give me your hand."

This was all, and then the two went in together, Laure's hand upon her brother's arm.

It was a marvelous life Mère Giraud lived during the next few days. Certainly she could not complain that she was not treated with deference and

affection. She wore the silk dress every day; she sat at the wonderful table, and a liveried servant stood behind her chair; she drove here and there in a luxurious carriage; she herself, in fact, lived the life of an aristocrat and a great lady. Better than all the rest, she found her Laure as gracious and dutiful as her fond heart could have wished. She spent every hour with her; she showed her all her grandeurs of jewelry and *toilette;* she was not ashamed of her mother, untutored and simple as she might be.

"Only she is very pale and quiet," she remarked to Valentin once; "even paler and more quiet than I should have expected. But then we know that the rich and aristocratic are always somewhat reserved. It is only the peasantry and provincials who are talkative and florid. It is natural that Laure should have gained the manner of the great world."

But her happiness, poor soul, did not last long, and yet the blow God sent was a kindly one.

One morning as they went out to their carriage Laure stopped to speak to a woman who crouched upon the edge of the pavement with a child in her arms. She bent down and touched the little one with her hand, and Mère Giraud, looking on, thought of pictures she had seen of the Blessed Virgin, and of lovely saints healing the sick.

"What is the matter?" asked Laure.

The woman looked down at the child and shivered.

"I do not know," she answered hoarsely. "Only we are ill, and God has forsaken us. We have not tasted food for two days."

Laure took something from her purse and laid it silently in the child's small, fevered hand. The woman burst into tears.

"Madame," she said, "it is a twenty-franc piece."

"Yes," said Laure gently. "When it is spent come to me again," and she went to her carriage.

"My child," said Mère Giraud, "it is you who are a saint. The good God did wisely in showering blessings upon you."

A few days longer she was happy, and then she awakened from her sleep one night, and found Laure standing at her bedside looking down at her and shuddering. She started up with an exclamation of terror.

"*Mon Dieu!*" she said. "What is it?"

She was answered in a voice she had never heard before, — Laure's, but hoarse and shaken. Laure had fallen upon her knees, and grasped the bedclothes, hiding her face in the folds.

"I am ill," she answered in this strange, changed tone. "I am — I am cold and burning — I am — dying."

In an instant Mère Giraud stood upon the floor holding her already insensible form in her arms. She was obliged to lay her upon the floor while she rang the bell to alarm the servants. She sent

for Valentin and a doctor. The doctor, arriving, regarded the beautiful face with manifest surprise and alarm. It was no longer pale, but darkly flushed, and the stamp of terrible pain was upon it.

"She has been exposed to infection," he said. "This is surely the case. It is a malignant fever."

Then Mère Giraud thought of the poor mother and child.

"O my God! she prayed, "do not let her die a martyr."

But the next day there was not a servant left in the house; but Valentin was there, and there had come a Sister of Mercy. When she came, Valentin met her, and led her into the *salon*. They remained together for half an hour, and then came out and went to the sick-room, and there were traces of tears upon the Sister's face. She was a patient, tender creature, who did her work well, and she listened with untiring gentleness to Mère Giraud's passionate plaints.

"So beautiful, so young, so beloved," cried the poor mother; "and Monsieur absent in Normandy, though it is impossible to say where! And if death should come before his return, who could confront him with the truth? So beautiful, so happy, so adored!"

And Laure lay upon the bed, sometimes wildly delirious, sometimes a dreadful statue of stone, — unhearing, unseeing, unmoving, — death without death's rest, — life in death's bonds of iron.

But while Mère Giraud wept, Valentin had no tears. He was faithful, untiring, but silent even at the worst.

"One would think he had no heart," said Mère Giraud; "but men are often so, — ready to work, but cold and dumb. Ah! it is only a mother who bears the deepest grief."

She fought passionately enough for a hope at first, but it was forced from her grasp in the end. Death had entered the house and spoken to her in the changed voice which had summoned her from her sleep.

"Madame," said the doctor one evening as they stood over the bed while the sun went down, "I have done all that is possible. She will not see the sun set again. She may not see it rise."

Mère Giraud fell upon her knees beside the bed, crossing herself and weeping.

"She will die," she said, "a blessed martyr. She will die the death of a saint."

That very night — only a few hours later — there came to them a friend, — one they had not for one moment even hoped to see, — a gentle, grave old man, in a thin, well-worn black robe, — the *Curé* of St. Croix.

Him Valentin met also, and when the two saw each other, there were barriers that fell away in their first interchange of looks.

"My son," said the old man, holding out his hands, "tell me the truth."

Then Valentin fell into a chair and hid his face.

"She is dying," he said, "and I cannot ask that she should live."

"What was my life" — he cried passionately, speaking again — "what was my life to me that I should not have given it to save her, — to save her to her beauty and honor, and her mother's love! I would have given it cheerfully, — a thousand times, — a thousand times again and again. But it was not to be; and, in spite of my prayers, I lost her. O my God!" with a sob of agony, "if to-night she were in St. Croix and I could hear the neighbors call her again as they used, 'Mère Giraud's little daughter!'"

The eyes of the *Curé* had tears in them also.

"Yesterday I returned to St. Croix and found your mother absent," he said. "I have had terrible fears for months, and when I found her house closed, they caused me to set out upon my journey at once."

He did not ask any questions. He remembered too well the man of whom Valentin had written; the son who was "past his youth, and had evidently seen the world;" the pale aristocrat, who had exclaimed "*Mon Dieu!*" at the sight of Laure's wondrous beauty.

"When the worst came to the worst," said Valentin, "I vowed myself to the labor of sparing our mother. I have worked early and late to sustain myself in the part I played. It was not from Laure the money came. My God! Do you think

I would have permitted my mother's hand to have touched a gift of hers? She wrote the letters, but the money I had earned honestly. Heaven will justify me for my falsehood since I have suffered so much."

"Yes," responded the *Curé*, looking at his bent form with gentle, pitying eyes, "Heaven will justify you, my son."

They watched by Laure until the morning, but she did not see them; she saw nothing; to-night it was the statue of marble which lay before them. But in the early morning, when the sky was dappled with pink and gold, and the air was fresh and cool, and a silence, even more complete than that of the night, seemed to reign, there came a change. The eyes they had seen closed for so many hours were opened, and the soft voice broke in upon the perfect stillness of the room: —

"The lilies in the garden are in bloom to-day. They were never so tall, and white, and fair before. I will gather them — for the altar — to give to the Virgin — at my confession. *Mea culpa — Mea*" — and all was over, and Mère Giraud fell upon her knees again, crying, as she had cried before, amid a passion of sobs and tears: —

"She has died, my child, the death of a blessed martyr."

It was rather strange, the villagers said, that Madame Legrand should have been buried in the little

graveyard at St. Croix instead of in some fine tomb at *Père la Chaise;* but — it was terribly sad! — her husband was away, they knew not where, and it was Valentin's wish, and Mère Giraud's heart yearned so over her beloved one. So she was laid there, and a marble cross was placed at her head — a tall, beautiful cross — by Monsieur Legrand, of course. Only it was singular that he never came, though perhaps that is the way of the great — not to mourn long or deeply even for those who have been most lovely, and whom they have most tenderly loved.

LODUSKY.

THEY were rather an incongruous element amid the festivities, but they bore themselves very well, notwithstanding, and seemed to be sufficiently interested. The elder of the two — a tall, slender, middle-aged woman, with a somewhat severe, though delicate face — sat quietly apart, looking on at the rough dances and games with a keen relish of their primitive uncouthness; but the younger, a slight, alert creature, moved here and there, her large, changeable eyes looking larger through their glow of excitement.

"Thet gal thar," drawled a tall mountaineer who supported himself against the chimney and spat with placid regularity into the fire. "They tell me thet gal thar hes writ things as hes been in print. They say she's powerful smart — arns her livin' by it. 'T least thet's what Jake Harney says, 'n' they's a-boardin' at Harney's. The old woman's some of her kin, 'n' goes 'long with her when she travels 'round."

There was one fiddler at work sawing industriously at one tune which did good service throughout the entertainment; there was a little furious and erratic reel-dancing, and much loud laughter, and good-natured, even if somewhat personal, jest. The room was one of two which formed the house; the walls were of log; the lights the cheery yellow flare of great pine-knots flung one after the other upon the embers.

"I am glad I thought of North Carolina," Rebecca Noble said to herself. There is a strong hint of Rembrandt in this, — the bright yellow light, the uncouth figures. Ah! who is that?"

A short time after, she made her way through the crowd to her relative's corner among the shadows. She looked eager and excited, and spoke in a quick, breathless fashion.

"I want to show you something, if you have not already seen it," she said. "There is in this room, Aunt Miriam, the most wonderful creature your eyes ever rested on! You must prepare yourself to be startled. Look toward the door — at that tall girl standing with her hands behind her."

She was attired in a calico of flaunting pattern, and leaned against the log wall in an indifferent attitude, regarding the company from under the heavy lashes of her eyes, which had a look of stillness in them which was yet not repose. There was something even secretive in her expression, as if she watched them furtively for reasons of her own. At

her side stood a big, discontented-looking young man, who confronted aggressively two or three other young men equally big, if not equally discontented, who seemed to be arguing some point with him and endeavoring to engage the attention of his companion. The girl, however, simply responded to their appeals with an occasional smile, ambiguous, if not scornful.

"How I wish I could hear them!" exclaimed Miss Noble.

It was her habit to utilize any material she chanced to find, and she had really made her summer jaunt to North Carolina in search of material, but she was not thinking of utilizing this girl, as she managed to keep near her during the remainder of the evening. She had merely found something to be keenly interested in, her interest in any human novelty being, on occasion, intense. In this case her interest increased instead of diminished. She found the girl comporting herself in her natural position as belle, with a calm which was slightly suggestive of "the noble savage." Each admirer seemed to be treated with indifference alike, though there were some who, for reasons best known to themselves, evidently felt that they stood more securely than the rest. She moved through game and dance with a slow yet free grace; she spoke seldom, and in a low, bell-like monotone, containing no hint of any possible emotional development, and for the rest, her shadow of a disdainful

smile seemed to stand her in good stead. Clearly as she stood out from among her companions from the first, at the close of the evening she assumed a position actually dramatic.

The big young mountaineer, who, despite his discontent, was a very handsome fellow indeed, had held his own against his rivals stubbornly during the evening, but when, after the final dance, he went in search of his charge, he found that he was not first.

She had fallen into her old attitude against the wall, her hands behind her, and was listening to the appeal of a brawny youth with a hunting-knife in his belt.

"Dusk," he was saying, "I'm not such a chicken-hearted chap as to let a gal go back on me. Ye sed I mout hev yer comp'ny home, 'n' I'm a-gwine to hev it, Dave Humes or no Dave Humes."

Dusk merely smiled tolerantly.

"Are ye?" she said.

Rebecca Noble, who stood within a few feet of them, was sure that the lover who approached was the Dave Humes in question, he advanced with such an angry stride, and laying his hand on his rival's shoulder, turned him aside so cavalierly.

"No he aint," he put in; "not an' me about. I brought ye, an' I'll take ye home, Lodusky, or me and him 'll settle it."

The other advanced a step, looking a trifle pale and disheveled. He placed himself square in front of Lodusky.

"Dusk Dunbar," he said, "you're the one to settle it. Which on us is a-gwine home with ye — me or him? Ye haint promised the two of us, hev ye?"

There was certainly a suddenly lit spark of exultation in the girl's coolly dropped eyes.

"Settle it betwixt ye," she answered with her exasperating half smile again.

They had attracted attention by this time, and were becoming the centre figures of a group of lookers-on.

The first had evidently lost his temper. She was the one who should settle it, he proclaimed loudly again. She had promised one man her "comp'ny" and had come with another.

There was so much fierce anger in his face that Miss Noble drew a little nearer, and felt her own blood warmed.

"Which on us is it to be?" he cried.

There was a quick, strong movement on the part of the young man Dave, and he was whirled aside for a second time.

"It's to be me," he was answered. "I'm the man to settle that — I don't leave it to no gal to settle."

In two seconds the lookers-on fell back in dismay, and there was a cry of terror from the women. Two lithe, long-limbed figures were struggling fiercely together, and there was a flash of knives in the air.

Rebecca Noble sprang forward.

"They will kill each other," she said. "Stop them!"

That they would have done each other deadly injury seemed more than probable, but there were cool heads and hands as strong as their own in the room, and in a few minutes they had been dragged apart and stood, each held back by the arms, staring at each other and panting. The lank peacemaker in blue jeans who held Dave Humes shook him gently and with amiable toleration of his folly.

"Look 'ere, boys," he said, "this yere's all a pack of foolishness, ye know — all a pack of foolishness. There aint no sense in it — it's jest foolishness."

Rebecca cast a quick glance at the girl Lodusky. She leaned against the wall just as she had done before; she was as cool as ever, though the spark which hinted at exultation still shone steadily in her eye.

When the two ladies reached the log-cabin at which they had taken up their abode, they found that the story of the event of the evening was before them. Their hostess, whose habit it was to present herself with erratic talk or information at all hours, met them with hospitable eagerness.

"Waal now," she began, "jest to think o' them thar fool boys a-lettin' into one another in thet thar way. I never hearn tell o' sich foolishness.

Young folks *is* so foolish. 'N' they drord knives?" This is in the tone of suggestive query.

"Yes," answered Miss Noble, "they drew knives."

"They did!" benignly. "Lord! What fools! Waal now, an' Dusk — what did Dusk do?"

"She stood by and looked on," was the reply.

"Lord!" with the inimitable mountain drawl; "ye don't say so! But it's jest like her — thet is. She's so cur'us, Dusk is. Thar aint no gettin' at her. Ye know the gals ses as she's allers doin' fust one quare thing 'n' then another to get the boys mad at each other. But Lor', p'r'aps 'taint so! Dusk's powerful good-lookin', and gals is jealous, ye know."

"Do you think," questioned Miss Noble, "that they really would have killed each other?"

"Lord! yaas," placidly. "They went to do it. Both Dan'l and Dave's kinder fiery, 'n' they'd nuther on 'em hev give in with Dusk a-lookin' on — they'd hev cut theirselves to pieces fust. Young folks *is* so foolish; gettin' mad about a gal! Lord knows gals is plenty enough."

"Not girls like this one," said Miss Noble, laughing a little.

"Waal now, she *is* good-lookin', aint she? But she's cur'us, Dusk is — she's a cur'us creetur."

"Curious!" echoed Rebecca, finding the term vague even while suggestive.

"Yaas," she said, expansively, "she's cur'us,

kinder onsosherble 'n' notionate. Now Dusk is — cur'us. She's so still and sot, 'n' Nath Dunbar and Mandy they think a heap on her, 'n' they do the best they kin by her, but she don't never seem to keer about 'em no way. Fur all she's so still, she's powerful sot on fine dressin' an' rich folkses ways. Nath he once tuk her to Asheville, 'n' seems like she's kinder never got over it, but keeps a-broodin' 'bout the way they done thar, 'n' how their clothes looked, 'n' all thet. She knows she's handsum, 'n' she likes to see other folks knows it, though she never says much. I hed to laugh at my Hamp once; Hamp he aint no fool, an' he'd been tuk with her a spell like the rest o' the boys, but he got chock full of her, 'n' one day we was a-talkin,' 'n' the old man he says, 'Waal now, that gal's a hard wad. She's cur'us, 'n' thar's no two ways about it.' An' Hamp he gives a bit of a laugh kinder mad, 'n' he ses, 'Yes, she's cur'us — cur'us as ——!' May be he felt kinder roughed up about her yet — but I hed to laugh."

The next morning Miss Noble devoted to letter-writing. In one of her letters, a bright one, of a tone rather warmer than the rest, she gave her correspondent a very forcible description of the entertainment of the evening before and its closing scene.

"I think it will interest him," she said half aloud, as she wrote upon the envelope the first part of the address, 'Mr. Paul Lennox.'

A shadow falling across the sunshine in the doorway checked her and made her look up.

It had rather an arousing effect upon her to find herself confronting the young woman, Lodusky, who stood upon the threshold, regarding her with an air entirely composed, slightly mingled with interest.

"I was in at Mis' Harney's," she remarked, as if the explanation was upon the whole rather superfluous, "'n' I thought I'd come in 'n' see ye."

During her sojourn of three weeks Rebecca had learned enough of the laws of mountain society to understand that the occasion only demanded of her friendliness of demeanor and perfect freedom from ceremony. She rose and placed a chair for her guest.

"I am glad to see you," she said.

Lodusky seated herself.

It was entirely unnecessary to attempt to set her at ease; her composure was perfect. The flaunting-patterned calico must have been a matter of full dress. It had been replaced by a blue-and-white-checked homespun gown — a coarse cotton garment short and scant. Her feet were bare, and their bareness was only a revelation of greater beauty, so perfect was their arched slenderness. Miss Dunbar crossed them with unembarrassed freedom, and looked at the stranger as if she found her worth steady inspection.

"Thet thar's a purty dress you're a-wearin'," she vouchsafed at length.

Rebecca glanced down at her costume. Being a sensible young person, she had attired herself in apparel suitable for mountain rambling. Her dress was simple pilgrim gray, taut made and trim; but she never lost an air of distinction which rendered abundant adornments a secondary matter.

"It is very plain," she answered. "I believe its chief object is to be as little in the way as possible."

"'Taint much trimmed," responded the girl, "but it looks kinder nice, 'n' it sets well. Ye come from the city, Mis' Harney says."

"From New York," said Rebecca. She felt sure that she saw in the tawny brown depths of the girl's eyes a kind of secret eagerness, and this expressed itself openly in her reply.

"I don't blame no one fur wantin' to live in a city," she said, with a kind of discontent. "A body might most as soon be dead as live this way."

Rebecca gave her a keen glance. "Don't you like the quiet?" she asked. "What is it you don't like?"

"I don't like nothin' about it," scornfully. "Thar's nothin' here."

Very slowly a lurking, half-hidden smile showed itself about her fine mouth.

"I'm not goin' to stay here allers," she said.

"You want to go away?" said Rebecca.

She nodded.

"I *am* goin'," she answered, "some o' these days."

"Where?" asked Rebecca, a little coldly, recognizing as she did a repellant element in the girl.

The reply was succinct enough: —

"I don't know whar, 'n' I don't keer whar — but I'm goin'."

She turned her eyes toward the great wall of forest-covered mountain, lifting its height before the open door, and the blood showed its deep glow upon her cheek.

"Some o' these days," she added; "as shore as I'm a woman."

When they talked the matter over afterward, Miss Thorne's remarks were at once decided and severe.

"Shall I tell you what my opinion is, Rebecca?" she said. "It is my opinion that there is evil enough in the creature to be the ruin of the whole community. She is bad at the core."

"I would rather believe," said Rebecca, musingly, "that she was only inordinately vain." Almost instantaneously her musing was broken by a light laugh. "She has dressed her hair as I dress mine," she said, "only it was done better. I could not have arranged it so well. She saw it last night and was quick enough to take in the style at a glance."

At the beginning of the next week there occurred an event which changed materially the ordinary routine of life in the cabin. Heretofore the two sojourners among the mountain fastnesses had walked and climbed under the escort of a small,

tow-headed Harney. But one evening as she sat sketching on her favorite flat seat of rock, Miss Noble somewhat alarmed this youth by dropping her paper and starting to her feet.

"Orlander" Harney sat and stared at her with black eyes and opened mouth. The red came and went under her fair skin, and she breathed quickly.

"Oh," she cried softly, "how *could* I be mistaken!"

That she was not mistaken became evident immediately. At the very moment she spoke, the advancing horseman, whose appearance had so roused her, glanced upward along the path and caught sight of her figure. He lifted his hat in gay greeting and struck his horse lightly with his whip. Rebecca bent down and picked up her portfolio.

"You may go home," she said quietly to the boy. "I shall be there soon; and you may tell Miss Thorne that Mr. Lennox has come." She was at the base of the rock when the stranger drew rein. "How is this?" she asked with bright uplifted eyes. "We did not think"—

It occurred to Lennox that he had never recognized her peculiar charm so fully as he did at this moment. Rebecca Noble, though not a beauty, possessed a subtle grace of look and air which was not easily resisted,—and just now, as she held out her hand, the clear sweetness of her face shadowed by her piquantly plain hat of rough straw, he felt the influence of this element more strongly than ever before.

"There was no reason why I should not come," he said, "since you did not forbid me."

At sunset they returned to the cabin. Lennox led his rather sorry-looking animal by the bridle, and trusting to its meekness of aspect, devoted his attention wholly to his companion.

"Thet's Nath Dunbar's critter," commented "Mis'" Harney, standing at the door. "They've powerful poor 'commodations fur boardin', but I reckon Nath must 'a' tuk him in."

"Then," said Rebecca, learning that this was the case, "then you have seen Lodusky."

But he had not seen Lodusky, it seemed. She had not been at home when he arrived, and he had only remained in the house long enough to make necessary arrangements before leaving it to go in search of his friends.

The bare, rough-walled room was very cheery that night. Lennox brought with him the gossip of the great world, to which he gave an air of freshness and spice that rendered it very acceptable to the temporary hermits. Outside, the moon shone with a light as clear as day, though softer, and the tender night breezes stirred the pine-tops and nestled among the laurels; inside, by the beautiful barbarous light of the flaring pine-knots on the hearth, two talkers, at least, found the hours fly swiftly.

When these two bade each other good-night it was only natural that they should reach the point

toward which they had been veering for twelve months.

Miss Thorne remained in the room, drawing nearer the fire with an amiable little shiver, well excused by the mountain coolness, but Rebecca was beguiled into stepping out into the moonlight. The brightness of the moon and the blackness of the shadows cast by trees and rocks and undergrowth, seemed somehow to heighten the effect of the intense and utter stillness reigning around them, — even the occasional distant cry of some wandering wild creature marked, rather than broke in upon, the silence. Rebecca's glance about her was half nervous.

"It is very beautiful," she said, "and it moves one strongly; but I am not sure that it is not, in some of one's moods, just a little oppressive."

It is possible Lennox did not hear her. He was looking down at her with eager eyes. Suddenly he had caught her hand to his lips and kissed it.

"You know why I am here, Rebecca," he said. "Surely, all my hoping is not vain?"

She looked pale and a little startled; but she lifted her face and did not draw herself away.

"Is it?" he asked again. "Have I come on a hopeless errand?"

"No," she answered. "You have not."

His words came freely enough then and with fire. When Rebecca reëntered the cabin her large eyes shone in her small, sweet face, and her lips wore a charming curve.

Miss Thorne turned in her chair to look at her and was betrayed into a smile.

"Mr. Lennox has gone, of course," she said.

"Yes."

Then, after a brief silence, in which Rebecca pushed the pine-knots with her foot, the elder lady spoke again.

"Don't you think you may as well tell me about it, Beck, my child?" she said.

Beck looked down and shook her head with very charming gravity.

"Why should I?" she asked. "When — when you know."

Lennox rode his mildly disposed but violently gaited steed homeward in that reposeful state of bliss known only to accepted lovers. He had plucked his flower at last; he was no longer one of the many; he was ecstatically content. Uncertainty had no charm for him, and he was by no means the first discoverer of the subtle fineness her admirers found so difficult to describe in Miss Noble. Granted that she was not a beauty, judged rigidly, still he had found in her soft, clear eye, in her color, in her charming voice, even in her little gestures, something which reached him as an artist and touched him as a man.

"One cannot exactly account for other women's paling before her," he said to himself; "but they do — and lose significance." And then he laughed tenderly. At this moment, it was true, every other thing on earth paled and lost significance.

That the family of his host had retired made itself evident to him when he dismounted at the house. To the silence of the night was added the silence of slumber. No one was to be seen; a small cow, rendered lean by active climbing in search of sustenance, breathed peacefully near the tumble-down fence; the ubiquitous, long-legged, yellow dog, rendered trustful by long seclusion, aroused himself from his nap to greet the arrival with a series of heavy raps upon the rickety porch-floor with a solid but languid tail. Lennox stepped over him in reaching for the gourd hanging upon the post, and he did not consider it incumbent upon himself to rise.

In a little hollow at the road-side was the spring from which the household supplies of water were obtained. Finding none in the wooden bucket, Lennox took the gourd with the intention of going down to the hollow to quench his thirst.

"We've powerful good water," his host had said in the afternoon, "'n' it's nigh the house, too. I built the house yer a-purpose, — on 'count of its bein' nigh."

He was unconsciously dwelling upon this statement as he walked, and trying to recall correctly the mountain drawl and twang.

"She," he said (there was only one "she" for him to-night) — "she will be sure to catch it and reproduce it in all its shades to the life."

He was only a few feet from the spring itself and

he stopped with a sharp exclamation of the most uncontrollable amazement, — stopped and stared straight before him. It was a pretty, dell-like place, darkly shadowed on one side but bathed in the flooding moonlight on the other, and it was something he saw in this flood of moonlight which almost caused him to doubt for the moment the evidence of his senses.

How it was possible for him to believe that there really could stand in such a spot a girl attired in black velvet of stagy cut and trimmings, he could not comprehend; but a few feet from him there certainly stood such a girl, who bent her lithe, round shape over the spring, gazing into its depths with all the eagerness of an insatiable vanity.

"I can't see nothin'," he heard her say impatiently. "I can't see nothin' nohow."

Despite the beauty, his first glance could not help showing him she was a figure so incongruous and inconsistent as to be almost *bizarre.* When she stood upright revealing fully her tall figure in its shabby finery, he felt something like resentment. He made a restive movement which she heard. The bit of broken looking-glass she held in her hand fell into the water, she uttered a shamefaced, angry cry.

"What d'ye want?" she exclaimed. "What are ye a-doin'? I didn't know as no one was a-lookin'. I"—

Her head was flung backward, her full throat

looked like a pillar of marble against the black edge of her dress, her air was fierce. He would not have been an artist if he had not been powerfully struck with a sense of her picturesqueness.

But he did not smile at all as he answered: —

"I board at the house there. I returned home late and was thirsty. I came here for water to drink."

Her temper died down as suddenly as it had flamed, and she seemed given up to a miserable, shamed trepidation.

"Oh," she said, "don't ye tell 'em — don't — I — I'm Dusk Dunbar."

Then, as was very natural, he became curious and possibly did smile — a very little.

"What in the name of all that is fantastic are you doing?"

She made an effort at being defiant and succeeded pretty well.

"I wasn't doin' no harm," she said. "I was — dressin' up a bit. It aint nobody's business."

"That's true," he answered coolly. "At all events it is not mine — though it is rather late for a lady to be alone at such a place. However, if you have no objection, I will get what I came for and go back."

She said nothing when he stepped down and filled the gourd, but she regarded him with a sort of irritable watchfulness as he drank.

"Are ye — are ye a-goin' to tell?" she faltered, when he had finished.

"No," he answered as coolly as before. "Why should I?"

Then he gave her a long look from head to foot. The dress was a poor enough velveteen and had a cast-off air, but it clung to her figure finely, and its sleeves were picturesque with puffs at the shoulder and slashings of white, — indeed the moonlight made her all black and white; her eyes, which were tawny brown by day, were black as velvet now under the straight lines of her brows, and her face was pure dead fairness itself.

When, his look ended, his eyes met hers, she drew back with an impatient movement.

"Ye look as if — as if ye thought I didn't get it honest," she exclaimed petulantly, "but I did."

That drew his glance toward her dress again, for of course she referred to that, and he could not help asking her a point-blank question.

"Where *did* you get it?" he said.

There was a slow flippancy about the manner of her reply which annoyed him by its variance with her beauty — but the beauty! How the moonlight and the black and white brought it out as she leaned against the rock, looking at him from under her lashes!

"Are ye goin' to tell the folks up at the house?" she demanded. "They don't know nothin', and I don't want 'em to know."

He shrugged his shoulder negatively.

She laughed with a hint of cool slyness and triumph.

"I got it at Asheville," she said. "I went with father when they was a show thar, 'n' the women stayed at the same tavern we was at, 'n' one of 'em tuk up with me 'n' I done somethin' for her — carried a letter or two," breaking into the sly, triumphant laugh again, "'n' she giv' me the dress fur pay. What d'ye think of it? Is it becomin'?"

The suddenness of the change of manner with which she said these last words was indescribable. She stood upright, her head up, her hands fallen at her sides, her eyes cool and straight — her whole presence confronting him with the power of which she was conscious.

"Is it?" she repeated.

He was a gentleman from instinct and from training, having ordinarily quite a lofty repugnance for all profanity and brusqueness, and yet somehow, — account for it as you will, — he had the next instant answered her with positive brutality.

"Yes," he answered, "Damnably!"

When the words were spoken and he heard their sound fall upon the soft night air, he was as keenly disgusted as he would have been if he had heard them uttered by another man. It was not until afterward when he had had leisure to think the matter over that he comprehended vaguely the force which had moved him.

But his companion received them without discomfiture. Indeed, it really occurred to him at the moment that there was a possibility that she

would have been less pleased with an expression more choice.

"I come down here to-night," she said, "because I never git no chance to do nothin' up at the house. I'm not a-goin' to let *them* know. Never mind why, but ye mustn't tell 'em."

He felt haughtily anxious to get back to his proper position.

"Why should I?" he said again. "It is no concern of mine."

Then for the first time he noticed the manner in which she had striven to dress her hair in the style of her model, Rebecca Noble, and this irritated him unendurably. He waved his hand toward it with a gesture of distaste.

"Don't do that again," he said. "That is not becoming at least" — though he was angrily conscious that it was.

She bent over the spring with a hint of alarm in her expression.

"Aint it?" she said, and the eager rapidity with which she lifted her hands and began to alter it almost drew a smile from him despite his mood.

"I done it like hern," she began, and stopped suddenly to look up at him. "You know her," she added; "they're at Harney's. Father said ye'd went to see her jest as soon as ye got here."

"I know her," was his short reply.

He picked up the drinking-gourd and turned away.

"Good-night," he said.

"Good-night."

At the top of the rocky incline he looked back at her.

She was kneeling upon the brink of the spring, her sleeve pushed up to her shoulder, her hand and arm in the water, dipping for the fragment of looking-glass.

It was really not wholly inconsistent that he should not directly describe the interview in his next meeting with his betrothed. Indeed, Rebecca was rather struck by the coolness with which he treated the subject when he explained that he had seen the girl and found her beauty all it had been painted.

"Is it possible," she asked, "that she did not quite please you?"

"Are you sure," he returned, "that she quite pleases *you?*"

Rebecca gave a moment to reflection.

"But her beauty" — she began, when it was over.

"Oh!" he interposed, "as a matter of color and curve and proportion she is perfect; one must admit that, however reluctantly."

Rebecca laughed.

"Why 'reluctantly?'" she said.

It was his turn to give a moment to reflection.

His face shadowed, and he looked a little disturbed.

"I don't know," he replied at length; "I give it up."

He had expected to see a great deal of the girl, but somehow he saw her even oftener than he had anticipated. During the time he spent in the house, chance seemed to throw her continually in his path or under his eye. From his window he saw her carrying water from the spring, driving the small agile cow to and from the mountain pasturage, or idling in the shade. Upon the whole it was oftener this last than any other occupation. With her neglected knitting in her hands she would sit for hours under a certain low-spreading cedar not far from the door, barefooted, coarsely clad, beautiful, — every tinge of the sun, every indifferent leisurely movement, a new suggestion of a new grace.

It would have been impossible to resist the temptation to watch her; and this Lennox did at first almost unconsciously. Then he did more. One beautiful still morning she stood under the cedar, her hand thrown lightly above her head to catch at a bough, and as she remained motionless, he made a sketch of her. When it was finished he was seized with the whimsical impulse to go out and show it to her.

She took it with an uncomprehending air, but

the moment she saw what it was a flush of triumphant joy lighted up her face.

"It's me," she cried in a low, eager voice. "Me! Do I look like that thar? Do I?"

"You look as that would look if it had color, and was more complete."

She glanced up at him sharply.

"D'ye mean if it was han'somer?"

He was tempted into adding to her excitement with a compliment.

"Yes," he said, "very much handsomer than I could ever hope to make it."

A slow, deep red rose to her face.

"Give it to me!" she demanded.

"If you will stand in the same position until I have drawn another — certainly," he returned.

He was fully convinced that when she repeated the attitude there would be added to it a look of consciousness.

When she settled into position and caught at the bough again, he watched in some distaste for the growth of the nervously complaisant air, but it did not appear. She was unconsciousness itself.

It is possible that Rebecca Noble had never been so happy during her whole life as she was during this one summer. Her enjoyment of every wild beauty and novelty was immeasurably keen. Just at this time to be shut out, and to be as it were high above the world, added zest to her pleasure.

"Ah," she said once to her lover, "happiness is better here — one can taste it slowly."

Fatigue seemed impossible to her. With Lennox as her companion she performed miracles in the way of walking and climbing, and explored the mountain fastnesses for miles around. Her step grew firm and elastic, her color richer, her laugh had a buoyant ring. She had never been so nearly a beautiful woman as she was sometimes when she came back to the cabin after a ramble, bright and sun-flushed, her hands full of laurel and vines.

"Your gown of 'hodden-gray' is wonderfully becoming, Beck," Lennox said again and again with a secret exulting pride in her.

Their plans for the future took tone from their blissful, unconventional life. They could not settle down until they had seen the world. They would go here and there, and perhaps, if they found it pleasanter so, not settle down at all. There were certain clay-white, closely built villages, whose tumble-down houses jostled each other upon divers precipitous cliffs on the wayside between Florence and Rome, toward which Lennox's compass seemed always to point. He rather argued that the fact of their not being dilated upon in the guide-books rendered them additionally interesting. Rebecca had her fancies too, and together they managed to talk a good deal of tender, romantic nonsense, which was purely their own business, and gave the summer days a delicate yet distinct flavor.

The evening after the sketch was made they spent upon the mountain side together. When

they stopped to rest, Lennox flung himself upon the ground at Rebecca's feet, and lay looking up at the far away blue of the sky in which a slow-flying bird circled lazily. Rebecca, with a cluster of pink and white laurel in her hand, proceeded with a metaphysical and poetical harangue she had previously begun.

"To my eyes," she said, "it has a pathetic air of loneliness — pathetic and yet not exactly sorrowful. It knows nothing but its own pure, brave, silent life. It is only pathetic to a worldling — worldlings like us. How fallen we must be to find a life desolate because it has only nature for a companion!"

She stopped with an idle laugh, waiting for an ironical reply from the "worldling" at her feet; but he remained silent, still looking upward at the clear, deep blue.

As she glanced toward him she saw something lying upon the grass between them, and bent to pick it up. It was the sketch which he had forgotten and which had slipped from the portfolio.

"You have dropped something," she said, and seeing what it was, uttered an exclamation of pleasure.

He came back to earth with a start, and, recognizing the sketch, looked more than half irritated.

"Oh, it is that, is it?" he said.

"It is perfect!" she exclaimed. "What a picture it will make!"

"It is not to be a picture," he answered. "It was not intended to be anything more than a sketch."

"But why not?" she asked. "It is too good to lose. You never had such a model in your life before."

"No," he answered grudgingly.

The hand with which Rebecca held the sketch dropped. She turned her attention to her lover, and a speculative interest grew in her face.

"That girl" — she said slowly, after a mental summing up occupying a few seconds — "that girl irritates you — irritates you."

He laughed faintly.

"I believe she does," he replied; "yes, 'irritates' is the word to use."

And yet if this were true, his first act upon returning home was a singular one.

He was rather late, but the girl Lodusky was sitting in the moonlight at the door. He stopped and spoke to her.

"If I should wish to paint you," he said rather coldly, "would you do me the favor of sitting to me?"

She did not answer him at once, but seemed to weigh his words as she looked out across the moonlight.

"Ye mean, will I let ye put me in a picter?" she said at last.

He nodded.

"Yes," she answered.

"I reckon he told ye he was a-paintin' Dusk's picter," "Mis'" Harney said to her boarders a week later.

"Mr. Lennox?" returned Rebecca; "yes, he told us."

"I thort so," nodding benignly. "Waal now, Dusk'll make a powerful nice picter if she don't git contrairy. The trouble with Dusk is her a-gittin' contrairy. She's as like old Hance Dunbar as she kin be. I mean in some ways. Lord knows, 'twouldn't do to say she was like him in everythin'."

Naturally, Miss Noble made some inquiries into the nature of old Hance Dunbar's "contrairiness." Secretly, she had a desire to account for Lodusky according to established theory.

"I wonder ye haint heern of him," said "Mis'" Harney. "He was just awful — old Hance! He was Nath's daddy, an' Lord! the wickedest feller! Folks was afeared of him. No one darsn't to go a-nigh him when he'd git mad — a-rippin' 'n' a-rearin' 'n' a-chargin'. 'N' he never got no religion, mind ye; he died jest that a-way. He was allers a hankerin' arter seein' the world, 'n' he went off an' stayed off a right smart while, — nine or ten year, — 'n' lived in all sorts o' ways in them big cities. When he come back he was a sight to see, sick 'n' pore 'n' holler-eyed, but as wicked as ever. Dusk was a little thing 'n' he was a old man, but he'd

laugh 'n' tell her to take care of her face 'n' be a smart gal. He was dreffu1 sick at last 'n' suffered a heap, 'n' one day he got up offen his bed 'n' tuk down Nath's gun 'n' shot hisself as cool as could be. He hadn't no patience, 'n' he said, 'When a G— derned man had lived through what he had 'n' then wouldn't die, it was time to kill him.' Seems like it sorter 'counts fur Dusk; she don't git her cur'usness from her own folks; Nath an' Mandy's mighty clever, both on 'em."

"Perhaps it does 'count for Dusk," Rebecca said, after telling the tale to Lennox. "It must be a fearful thing to have such blood in one's veins and feel it on fire. Let us," she continued with a smile, "be as charitable as possible."

When the picture was fairly under way, Lennox's visits to the Harneys' cabin were somewhat less frequent. The mood in which she found he had gradually begun to regard his work aroused in Rebecca a faint wonder. He seemed hardly to like it, and yet to be fascinated by it. He was averse to speaking freely of it, and still he thought of it continually. Frequently when they were together, he wore an absent, perturbed air.

"You do not look content," she said to him once.

He passed his hand quickly across his forehead and smiled, plainly with an effort, but he made no reply.

The picture progressed rather slowly upon the

whole. Rebecca had thought the subject a little fantastic at first, and yet had been attracted by it. A girl in a peculiar dress of black and white bent over a spring with an impatient air, trying in vain to catch a glimpse of her beauty in the reflection of the moonlight.

"It 's our spring, shore," commented "Mis'" Dunbar. "'N' its Dusk — but Lord! how fine she's fixed. Ye're as fine as ye want to be in the picter, Dusk, if ye wa'n't never fine afore. Don't ye wish ye had sich dressin' as thet thar now?"

The sittings were at the outset peculiarly silent. There was no untimely motion or change of expression, and yet no trying passiveness. The girl gave any position a look of unconsciousness quite wonderful. Privately, Lennox was convinced that she was an actress from habit — that her ease was the result of life-long practice. Sometimes he found his own consciousness of her steady gaze almost unbearable. He always turned to meet her deep eyes fixed upon him with an expression he could not fathom. Frequently he thought it an expression of dislike — of secret resentment — of subtle defiance. There came at last a time when he knew that he turned toward her again and again because he felt that he must — because he had a feverish wish to see if the look had changed.

Once when he did this he saw that it *had* changed. She had moved a little, her eyes were dilated with a fire which startled him beyond self-

control, her color came and went, she breathed fast. The next instant she sprang from her chair.

"I wont stand it no longer," she cried panting; "no longer — I wont!"

Her ire was magnificent. She flung her head back, and struck her side with her clinched hand.

"No longer!" she said; "not a minute!"

Lennox advanced one step and stood, palette in hand, gazing at her.

"What have I done?" he asked. "What?"

"What?" she echoed with contemptuous scorn. "Nothin'! *But d'ye think I don't know ye?*"

"Know me!" he repeated after her mechanically, finding it impossible to remove his glance from her.

"What d'ye take me me fur?" she demanded. "A fool? Yes, I was a fool — a fool to come here, 'n' set 'n' let ye — let ye despise me!" in a final outburst.

Still he could only echo her again, and say "Despise you!"

Her voice lowered itself into an actual fierceness of tone.

"Ye've done it from first to last," she said. "Would ye look at her like ye look at me? Would ye turn half way 'n' look at her, 'n' then turn back as if — as if —. Aint there" — her eyes ablaze — "aint there no *life* to me?"

"Stop!" he began hoarsely.

"I'm beneath her, am I?" she persisted. "Me

beneath another woman — Dusk Dunbar! It's the first time!"

She walked toward the door as if to leave him, but suddenly she stopped. A passionate tremor shook her; he saw her throat swell. She threw her arm up against the logs of the wall and dropped her face upon it sobbing tumultuously.

There was a pause of perhaps three seconds. Then Lennox moved slowly toward her. Almost unconsciously he laid his hand upon her heaving shoulder and so stood trembling a little.

When Rebecca paid her next visit to the picture it struck her that it appeared at a standstill. As she looked at it her lover saw a vague trouble growing slowly in her eyes.

"What!" he remarked. "It does not please you?"

"I think," she answered, — "I feel as if it had not pleased you."

He fell back a few paces and stood scanning it with an impression at once hard and curious.

"Please me!" he exclaimed in a voice almost strident. "It should. She has beauty enough."

On her return home that day Rebecca drew forth from the recesses of her trunk her neglected writing folio and a store of paper.

Miss Thorne, entering the room, found her kneeling over her trunk, and spoke to her.

"What are you going to do?" she asked.

Rebeeca smiled faintly.

"What I ought to have begun before," she said. "I am behindhand with my work."

She laid the folio and her inkstand upon the table, and made certain methodical arrangements for her labor. She worked diligently all day, and looked slightly pale and wearied when she rose from her seat in the evening. Until eleven o'clock she sat at the open door, sometimes talking quietly, sometimes silent and listening to the wind among the pines. She did not mention her lover's name, and he did not come. She spent many a day and night in the same manner after this. For the present the long, idle rambles and unconventional moon-lit talks were over. It was tacitly understood between herself and her aunt that Lennox's labor occupied him.

"It seems a strange time to begin a picture — during a summer holiday," said Miss Thorne a little sharply upon one occasion.

Rebecca laughed with an air of cheer.

"No time is a strange time to an artist," she answered. "Art is a mistress who gives no holidays."

She was continually her bright, erect, alert self. The woman who loved her dearly and had known her from her earliest childhood, found her sagacity and knowledge set at naught as it were. She had been accustomed to see her niece admired far beyond the usual lot of women; she had gradually

learned to feel it only natural that she should inspire quite a strong sentiment even in casual acquaintances. She had felt the delicate power of her fascination herself, but never at her best and brightest had she found her more charming or quicker of wit and fancy than she was now.

Even Lennox, coming every few days with a worn-out look and touched with a haggard shadow, made no outward change in her.

"She does not look," said the elder lady to herself, "like a neglected woman." And then the sound of the phrase struck her with a sharp incredulous pain. "A neglected woman!" she repeated, — "Beck!"

She did not understand, and was not weak enough to ask questions.

Lennox came and went, and Rebecca gained upon her work until she could no longer say she was behindhand. The readers of her letters and sketches found them fresh and sparkling, "as if," wrote a friend, "you were braced both mentally and physically by the mountain air."

But once in the middle of the night Miss Thorne awakened with a mysterious shock to find the place at her side empty, and her niece sitting at the open window in a quiet which suggested that she might not have moved for an hour.

She obeyed her strong first impulse, and rose and went to her.

She laid her hand on her shoulder, and shook her gently.

"Beck!" she demanded, "what are you doing?"

When the girl turned slowly round, she started at the sight of her cold, miserable pallor.

"I am doing nothing — nothing," she answered. "Why did you get up? It's a fine night, isn't it?"

Despite her discretion, Miss Thorne broke down into a blunder.

"You — you never look like this in the daytime!" she exclaimed.

"No," was the reply given with cool deliberateness. "No; I would rather *die*."

For the moment she was fairly incomprehensible. There was in the set of her eye and the expression of her fair, clear face, the least hint of dogged obstinacy.

"Beck" — she began.

"You ought not to have got up," said Beck. "It is enough to look 'like this' at night when I am by myself. Go back to bed, if you please."

Miss Thorne went back to bed meekly. She was at once alarmed and subdued. She felt as if she had had a puzzling interview with a stranger.

In these days Lennox regarded his model with morbid interest. A subtle change was perceptible in her. Her rich color deepened, she held herself more erect, her eye had a larger pride and light. She was a finer creature than ever, and yet — she came at his call. He never ceased to wonder at

it. Sometimes the knowledge of his power stirred within him a vast impatience; sometimes he was hardened by it; but somehow it never touched him, though he was thrown into tumult — bound against his will. He could not say that he understood her. Her very passiveness baffled him and caused him to ask himself what it meant. She spoke little, and her emotional phases seemed reluctant, but her motionless face and slowly raised eye always held a meaning of their own.

On an occasion when he mentioned his approaching departure, she started as if she had received a blow, and he turned to see her redden and pale alternately, her face full of alarm.

"What is the matter?" he asked brusquely.

"I — hadn't bin thinkin' on it," she stammered. "I'd kinder forgot."

He turned to his easel again and painted rapidly for a few minutes. Then he felt a light touch on his arm. She had left her seat noiselessly and stood beside him. She gave him a passionate, protesting look. A fire of excitement seemed to have sprung up within her and given her a defiant daring.

"D'ye think I'll stay here — when ye're gone — like I did before?" she said.

She had revealed herself in many curious lights to him, but no previous revelation had been so wonderful as was the swift change of mood and bearing which took place in her at this instant. In

a moment she had melted into soft tears, her lips were tremulous, her voice dropped into a shaken whisper.

"I've allers wanted to go away," she said. "I — I've allers said I would. I want to go to a city somewhar — I don't keer whar. I might git work — I've heerd of folks as did. P'r'aps some un ud hire me!"

He stared at her like a man fascinated.

"*You* go to the city alone!" he said under his breath. "*You* try to get work!"

"Yes," she answered. "Don't ye know no one" —

He stopped her.

"No," he said, "I don't. It would be a dangerous business unless you had friends. As for me, I shall not be in America long. As soon as I am married I go with my wife to Europe."

He heard a sharp click in her throat. Her tears were dried, and she was looking straight at him.

"Are ye a-goin' to be married?" she asked.

"Yes."

"To — *her?*" with a gesture in the direction of the Harneys' cabin.

"Yes."

"Oh!" and she walked out of the room.

He did not see her for three days, and the picture stood still. He went to the Harneys' and found Rebecca packing her trunk.

"We are going back to New York," she said.

"Why?" he asked.

"Because our holiday is over."

Miss Thorne regarded him with chill severity.

"When may we expect to see you?" she inquired.

He really felt half stupefied, — as if for the time being his will was paralyzed.

"I don't know," he answered.

He tried to think that he was treated badly and coldly. He told himself that he had done nothing to deserve this style of thing, that he had simply been busy and absorbed in his work, and that if he had at times appeared preoccupied it was not to be wondered at. But when he looked at Rebecca he did not put these thoughts into words; he did not even say that of course he should follow them soon, since there was nothing to detain him but a sketch or two he had meant to make.

By night they were gone and he was left restless and miserable. He was so restless that he could not sleep but wandered down toward the spring. He stopped at the exact point at which he had stopped on the night of his arrival — at the top of the zigzag little path leading down the rocky incline. He stopped because he heard a sound of passionate sobbing. He descended slowly. He knew the sound — angry, fierce, uncontrollable — because he had heard it before. It checked itself the instant he reached the ground. Lodusky lean-

ing against a projecting rock kept her eyes fixed upon the water.

"Why did you come here?" he demanded, a little excitedly. "What are you crying for? What has hurt you?"

"Nothin'," in a voice low and unsteady.

He drew a little nearer to her and for the first time was touched. She would not look at him, she was softened and altered, in her whole appearance, by a new pallor.

"Have" — he began, "have I?"

"You!" she cried, turning on him with a bitter, almost wild, gesture. "*You* wouldn't keer if I was struck *dead* afore ye!"

"Look here," he said to her, with an agitation he could not master. "Let me tell you something about myself. If you think I am a passably good fellow you are mistaken. I am a bad fellow, a poor fellow, an ignoble fellow. You don't understand?" as she gazed at him in bewilderment. "No, of course, you don't. God knows I didn't myself until within the last two weeks. It's folly to say such things to you; perhaps I say them half to satisfy myself. But I mean to show you that I am not to be trusted. I think perhaps I am too poor a fellow to love any woman honestly and altogether. I followed one woman here, and then after all let another make me waver" —

"Another!" she faltered.

He fixed his eyes on her almost coldly.

"You," he said.

He seemed to cast the word at her and wonder what she would make of it. He waited a second or so before he went on.

"*You*, and yet you are not the woman I love either. Good God! What a villain I must be. I am an insult to every woman that breathes. It is not even you — though I can't break from you, and you have made me despise myself. There! do you know now — do you see now that I am not worth" —

The next instant he started backward. Before he had time for a thought she had uttered a low cry, and flung herself down at his feet.

"I don't keer," she panted; "I wont keer fur nothin', — whether ye're good or bad, — only don't leave me here when ye go away."

A week later Lennox arose one morning and set about the task of getting his belongings together. He had been up late and had slept heavily and long. He felt exhausted and looked so.

The day before, his model had given him his last sitting. The picture stood finished upon the easel. It was a thorough and artistic piece of work, and yet the sight of it was at times unbearable to him. There were times again, however, when it fascinated him anew when he went and stood opposite to it, regarding it with an intense gaze. He scarcely knew how the last week had passed. It

seemed to have been spent in alternate feverish struggles and reckless abandonment to impulse. He had let himself drift here and there, he had at last gone so far as to tell himself that the time had arrived when baseness was possible to him.

"I don't promise you an easy life," he had said to Dusk the night before. "I tell you I am a bad fellow, and I have lost something through you that I cared for. You may wish yourself back again."

"If you leave me," she said, "I'll kill myself!" and she struck her hands together.

For the moment he was filled, as he often was, with a sense of passionate admiration. It was true he saw her as no other creature had ever seen her before, that so far as such a thing was possible with her, she loved him — loved him with a fierce, unreserved, yet narrow passion.

He had little actual packing to do — merely the collecting of a few masculine odds and ends, and then his artistic accompaniments. Nothing was of consequence but these; the rest were tossed together indifferently, but the picture was to be left until the last moment, that its paint might be dry beyond a doubt.

Having completed his preparations he went out. He had the day before him, and scarcely knew what to do with it, but it must be killed in one way or another. He wandered up the mountain and at last lay down with his cigar among the laurels. He was full of a strange excitement which now thrilled, now annoyed him.

He came back in the middle of the afternoon and laughed a rather half-hearted laugh at the excellent Mandy's comment upon his jaded appearance.

"Ye look kinder tuckered out," she said. "Ye'd oughtn't ter walked so fur when ye was a-gwine off to-night. Ye'd orter rested."

She stopped the churn-dasher and regarded him with a good-natured air of interest.

"Hev ye seed Dusk to say good-by to her?" she added. "She's went over the mountain ter help Mirandy Stillins with her soap. She wont be back fur a day or two."

He went into his room and shut the door. A fierce repulsion sickened him. He had heretofore held himself with a certain degree of inward loftiness; he had so condemned the follies and sins of other men, and here he found himself involved in a low and common villainy, in the deceits which belonged to his crime, and which preyed upon simplicity and ignorant trust.

He went and stood before his easel, hot with a blush of self-scorn.

"Has it come to this?" he muttered through his clinched teeth — "to *this!*"

He made an excited forward movement; his foot touched the supports of the easel, jarring it roughly; the picture fell upon the floor.

"What?" he cried out. "Beck! You! Great God!"

For before him, revealed by the picture's fall, the easel held one of the fairest memories he had of the woman he had proved himself too fickle and slight to value rightly.

It was merely a sketch made rapidly one day soon after his arrival and never wholly completed, but it had been touched with fire and feeling, and the face looked out from the canvas with eyes whose soft happiness stung him to the quick with the memories they brought. He had meant to finish it, and had left it upon the easel that he might turn to it at any moment, and it had remained there, covered by a stronger rival — forgotten.

He sat down in a chair and his brow fell upon his hands. He felt as if he had been clutched and dragged backward by a powerful arm.

When at last he rose, he strode to the picture lying upon the floor, ground it under his heel, and spurned it from him with an imprecation.

He was, at a certain hour, to reach a particular bend in the road some miles distant. He was to walk to this place and if he found no one there, to wait.

When at sunset that evening he reached it, he was half an hour before the time specified, but he was not the first at the tryst. He was within twenty yards of the spot when a figure rose from the roots of a tree and stood waiting for him — the girl Dusk with a little bundle in her hand.

She was not flushed or tremulous with any hint of mental excitement; she awaited him with a fine repose, even the glow of the dying sun having no power to add to her color, but as he drew near he saw her look gradually change. She did not so much as stir, but the change grew slowly, slowly upon her face, and developed there into definite shape — the shape of secret, repressed dread.

"What is it," she asked when he at last confronted her, "that ails ye?"

She uttered the words in a half whisper, as if she had not the power to speak louder, and he saw the hand hanging at her side close itself.

"What is it — that ails ye?"

He waited a few seconds before he answered her.

"Look at me," he said at last, "and see."

She did look at him. For the space of ten seconds their eyes were fixed upon each other in a long, bitter look. Then her little bundle dropped on the ground.

"Ye've went back on me," she said under her breath again. "Ye've went back on me!"

He had thought she might make some passionate outcry, but she did not yet. A white wrath was in her face and her chest heaved, but she spoke slowly and low, her hands fallen down by her side.

"Ye've went back on me," she said. "An' *I knew ye would.*"

He felt that the odor of his utter falseness tainted

the pure air about him; he had been false all round, — to himself, to his love, to his ideals, — even in a baser way here.

"Yes," he answered her with a bitterness she did not understand, "I've gone back on you." Then, as if to himself, "I could not even reach perfection in villainy."

Then her rage and misery broke forth.

"Yer a coward!" she said, with gasps between her words. "Yer afraid! I'd sooner — I'd sooner ye'd killed me — *dead!*"

Her voice shrilled itself into a smothered shriek, she cast herself face downward upon the earth and lay there clutching amid her sobs at the grass.

He looked down at her in a cold, stunned fashion.

"Do you think," he said hoarsely, "that you can loathe me as I loathe myself? Do you think you can call me one shameful name I don't know I deserve? If you can, for God's sake let me have it."

She struck her fist against the earth.

"Thar wasn't a man I ever saw," she said, "that didn't foller after me, 'n' do fur me, 'n' wait fur a word from me. They'd hev let me set my foot on 'em if I'd said it. Thar wasn't nothin' I mightn't hev done — not nothin'. An' now — an' now" — and she tore the grass from its earth and flung it from her.

"Go on," he said. "Go on and say your worst."

Her worst was bad enough, but he almost exulted under the blows she dealt him. He felt their

horrible sting a vague comfort. He had fallen low enough surely when it was a comfort to be told that he was a liar, a poltroon, and a scoundrel.

The sun had been down an hour when it was over and she had risen and taken up her bundle.

"Why don't ye ask me to forgive ye?" she said with a scathing sneer. "Why don't ye ask me to forgive ye — an' say ye didn't mean to do it?"

He fell back a pace and was silent. With what grace would the words have fallen from his lips? And yet he knew that he had not *meant* to do it.

She turned away and at a distance of a few feet stopped. She gave him a last look — a fierce one in its contempt and anger, and her affluence of beauty had never been so stubborn a fact before.

"Ye think ye've left me behind," she said. "An' so ye hev — but it aint fur allers. The time'll come when mebbe ye'll see me ag'in."

He returned to New York, but he had been there a week before he went to Rebecca. Finally, however, he awoke one morning feeling that the time had come for the last scene of his miserable drama. He presented himself at the house and sent up his name, and in three minutes Rebecca came to him.

It struck him with a new thrill of wretchedness to see that she wore by chance the very dress she had worn the day he had made the sketch — a pale, pure-looking gray, with a scarf of white lace loosely fastened at her throat. Next, he saw that

there was a painful change in her, that she looked frail and worn, as if she had been ill. His first words he scarcely heard and never remembered. He had not come to make a defense, but a naked, bitter confession. As he made it low and monotonously, in brief, harsh words, holding no sparing for himself, Rebecca stood with her hand upon the mantle looking at him with simple directness. There was no rebuke in her look, but there was weariness. It occurred to him once or twice and with a terribly humiliating pang, that she was tired of him, — tired of it all.

"I have lost you," he ended. "And I have lost myself. I have seen myself as I am, — a poorer figure, a grosser one than I ever dreamed of being, even in the eyes of my worst enemy. Henceforth, this figure will be my companion. It is as if I looked at myself in a bad glass; but now, though the reflection is a pitiable one, the glass is true."

"You think," she said, after a short silence, "of going away?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"To Europe."

"Oh," she ejaculated, with a soft, desperate sound of pain.

His eyes had been downcast and he raised them.

"Yes," he said, mournfully. "We were to have gone together."

"Yes," she answered, "together."

Her eyes were wet.

"I was very happy," she said, "for a little while."

She held out her hand.

"But," she added, as if finishing a sentence, "you have been truer to me than you think."

"No — no," he groaned.

"Yes, truer to me than you think — and truer to yourself. It was I you loved — I! There have been times when I thought I must give that up, but now I know I need not. It was I. Sometime, perhaps, — sometime, — not now" —

Her voice broke, she did not finish, the end was a sob. Their eyes rested upon each other a few seconds, and then he released her hand and went away.

He was absent for two years, and during that time his friends heard much good of him. He lived the life of a recluse and a hard worker. He learned to know his own strength, and taught the world to recognize it also.

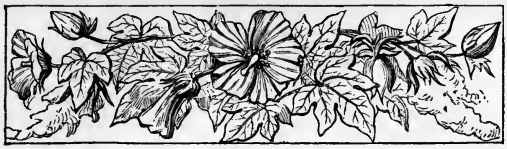
At the end of the second year, being in Paris, he went one night to the *Nouvelle Opéra*. Toward the close of the second act he became conscious of a little excited stir among those surrounding him. Every glass seemed directed toward a new arrival who stood erect and cool in one of the stage-boxes. She might have been Cleopatra. Her costume was of a creamy satin, she was covered with jewels, and

she stood up confronting the house, as it regarded her, with *sang froid.*

Lennox rose hurriedly and left the place. He was glad to breathe the bitterly cold but pure night air. She had made no idle prophecy. He had seen her again!

There hung upon the wall of his private room a picture whose completion had been the first work after his landing. He went in to it and looked at it with something like adoration.

"'Sometime'" he said, "perhaps now," and the next week he was on his way home.



"SETH."

HE came in one evening at sunset with the empty coal-train — his dull young face pale and heavy-eyed with weariness, his corduroy suit dusty and travel-stained, his worldly possessions tied up in the smallest of handkerchief bundles and slung upon the stick resting on his shoulder — and naturally his first appearance attracted some attention among the loungers about the shed dignified by the title of "dépôt." I say "naturally," because arrivals upon the trains to Black Creek were so scarce as to be regarded as curiosities; which again might be said to be natural. The line to the mines had been in existence two months, since the English company had taken them in hand and pushed the matter through with an energy startling to, and not exactly approved by, the majority of good East Tennesseeans. After the first week or so of arrivals — principally Welsh and English miners, with an occasional Irishman — the trains had returned daily to the Creek without a passenger; and accordingly this one created some trifling sensation.

Not that his outward appearance was particularly interesting or suggestive of approaching excitement. He was only a lad of nineteen or twenty, in working English-cut garb, and with a short, awkward figure, and a troubled, homely face — a face so homely and troubled, in fact, that its half-bewildered look was almost pathetic.

He advanced toward the shed hesitatingly, and touched his cap as if half in clumsy courtesy and half in timid appeal. "Mesters," he said, "good-day to yo'."

The company bestirred themselves with one accord, and to the roughest and most laconic gave him a brief "Good-day."

"You're English," said a good-natured Welshman, "ar'n't you, my lad?"

"Ay, mester," was the reply: "I'm fro' Lancashire."

He sat down on the edge of the rough platform, and laid his stick and bundle down in a slow, wearied fashion.

"Fro' Lancashire," he repeated in a voice as wearied as his action — "fro' th' Deepton coal-mines theer. You'll know th' name on 'em, I ha' no doubt. Th' same company owns 'em as owns 'hese."

"What!" said an outsider — "Langley an' 'em?"

The boy turned himself round and nodded. "Ay," he answered — "them. That was why I comn here. I comn to get work fro' — fro' *him*."

He faltered in his speech oddly, and even reddened a little, at the same time rubbing his hands together with a nervousness which seemed habitual to him.

"Mester Ed'ard, I mean," he added — "th' young mester as is here. I heerd as he liked 'Merika, an' — an' I comn."

The loungers glanced at each other, and their glance did not mean high appreciation of the speaker's intellectual powers. There was a lack of practicalness in such faith in another man as expressed itself in the wistful, hesitant voice.

"Did he say he'd give you work?" asked the first man who had questioned him, the Welshman Evans.

"No. I dunnot think — I dunnot think he'd know me if he seed me. Theer wur so many on us."

Another exchange of glances, and then another question: "Where are you going to stay?"

The homely face reddened more deeply, and the lad's eyes — dull, soft, almost womanish eyes — raised themselves to the speaker's. "Do yo' know anybody as would be loikely to tak' me in a bit," he said, "until I ha' toime to earn th' wage to pay? I wouldna wrong no mon a penny as had trusted me."

There was manifest hesitation, and then some one spoke: "Lancashire Jack might."

"Mester," said the lad to Evans, "would you

moind speakin' a word fur me? I ha' had a long tramp, an' I'm fagged-loike, an'" — He stopped and rose from his seat with a hurried movement. "Who's that theer as is comin'?" he demanded. "Isna it th' young mester?"

The some one in question was a young man on horseback, who at that moment turned the corner and rode toward the shed with a loose rein, allowing his horse to choose his own pace.

"Ay," said the lad with an actual tremor in his excited voice — "it's him, sure enow," and sank back on his seat again as if he had found himself scarcely strong enough to stand. "I — I ha' not eaten much fur two or three days," he said to Evans.

There was not a man on the platform who did not evince some degree of pleasure at the approach of the new-comer. The last warm rays of the sun, already sinking behind the mountains, seemed rather to take pride in showing what a debonair young fellow he was, in glowing kindly upon his handsome face and strong, graceful figure, and touching up to greater brightness his bright hair.

The face was one to be remembered with a sentiment approaching gratitude for the mere existence of such genial and unspoiled good looks, but the voice that addressed the men was one to be loved, and loved without stint, it was so clear and light-hearted and frank.

"Boys," said he, "good-evening to you. Evans, if you could spare me a minute" —

Evans rose at once.

"I'll speak to *him*," he said to the lad at his side. "His word will go further with Lancashire Jack than mine would." He went to the horse's side, and stood there for a few minutes talking in an undertone, and then he turned to the stranger and beckoned. "Come here," he said.

The lad took up his bundle and obeyed the summons, advancing with an awkward almost stumbling step, suggestive of actual weakness as well as the extremity of shyness. Reaching the two men, he touched his cap humbly, and stood with timorous eyes upraised to the young man's face.

Langley met his glance with a somewhat puzzled look, which presently passed away in a light laugh. "I'm trying to remember who you are, my lad," he said, "but I shall be obliged to give it up. I know your face, I think, but I have no recollection of your name. I dare say I have seen you often enough. You came from Deepton, Evans tells me."

"Ay, mester, fro' Deepton."

"A long journey for a lad like you to take alone," with inward pity for the heavy face.

"Ay, mester."

"And now you want work?"

"If you please, mester."

"Well, well!" cheerily, "we will give it to you.

There's work enough, though it isn't such as you had at Deepton. What is your name?"

"Seth, mester — Seth Raynor," shifting the stick and bundle in uneasy eagerness from one shoulder to another. "An' I'm used to hard work, mester. It wur na easy work we had at th' Deepton mine, an' I'm stronger than I look. It's th' faggedness as makes me trembly — an' hunger."

"Hunger?"

"I ha' not tasted sin' th' neet before last," shamefacedly. "I hadna th' money to buy, an' it seemt loike I could howd out."

"Hold out!" echoed Langley in some excitement. "That's a poor business, my lad. Here, come with me. The other matter can wait, Evans."

The downcast face and ungainly figure troubled him in no slight degree as they moved off together, they seemed to express in some indescribable fashion so much of dull and patient pain, and they were so much at variance with the free grandeur of the scene surrounding them. It was as if a new element were introduced into the very air itself. Black Creek was too young yet to have known hunger or actual want of any kind. The wild things on the mountain sides had scarcely had time to learn to fear the invaders of their haunts or understand that they were to be driven backward. The warm wind was fragrant with the keen freshness of pine and cedar. Mountain and forest

and sky were stronger than the human stragglers they closed around and shut out from the world.

"We don't see anything like that in Lancashire," said Langley. "That kind of thing is new to us, my lad, isn't it?" with a light gesture toward the mountain, in whose side the workers had burrowed.

"Ay, mester," raising troubled eyes to its grandeur — "ivverything's new. I feel aw lost sometoimes, an' feared-loike."

Langley lifted his hat from his brow to meet a little passing breeze, and as it swept softly by he smiled in the enjoyment of its coolness. "Afraid?" he said. "I don't understand that."

"I dunnot see into it mysen', mester. Happen it's th' bigness, an' quiet, an' th' lonely look, an' happen it's summat wrong in mysen'. I've lived in th' cool an' smoke an' crowd an' work so long as it troubles me in a manner to — to ha' to look so high."

"Does it?" said Langley, a few faint lines showing themselves on his forehead. "That's a queer fancy. So high!" turning his glance upward to where the tallest pine swayed its dark plume against the clear blue. "Well, so it is. But you will get used to it in time," shaking off a rather unpleasant sensation.

"Happen so, mester, in toime," was the simple answer; and then silence fell upon them again.

They had not very far to go. The houses of the miners — rough shanties hurriedly erected to supply immediate needs — were most of them congregated together, or at most stood at short distances from each other, the larger ones signifying the presence of feminine members in a family, and perhaps two or three juvenile pioneers — the smaller ones being occupied by younger miners, who lived in couples, or sometimes even alone.

Before one of the larger shanties Langley reined in his horse. "A Lancashire man lives here," he said, "and I am going to leave you with him."

In answer to his summons a woman came to the door — a young woman whose rather unresponsive face wakened somewhat when she saw who waited.

"Feyther," she called out, "it's Mester Langley, an' he's gotten a stranger wi' him."

"Feyther," approaching the door, showed himself a burly individual, with traces of coal-dust in all corners not to be reached by hurried and not too fastidious ablutions. Clouds of tobacco-smoke preceded and followed him, and much stale incense from the fragrant weed exhaled itself from his well-worn corduroys. "I ha' not nivver seed him afore," he remarked after a gruff by no means ill-natured greeting, signifying the stranger by a duck of the head in his direction.

"A Lancashire lad, Janner," answered Langley: "I want a home for him."

Janner regarded him with evident interest, but shook his head dubiously. "Ax th' missus," he remarked succinctly: "dunnot ax me."

Langley's good-humored laugh had a touch of conscious power in it. If it depended upon "th' missus" he was safe enough. His bright good looks and gay grace of manner never failed with the women. The most practical and uncompromising melted, however unwillingly, before his sunshine, and the suggestion of chivalric deference which seemed a second nature with him. So it was easy enough to parley with "th' missus."

"A Lancashire lad, Mrs. Janner," he said, "and so I know you'll take care of him. Lancashire folk have a sort of fellow feeling for each other, you see; that was why I could not make up my mind to leave him until I saw him in good hands; and yours are good ones. Give him a square meal as soon as possible," he added in a lower voice: "I will be accountable for him myself."

When he lifted his hat and rode away, the group watched him until he was almost out of sight, the general sentiment expressing itself in every countenance.

"Theer's summat noice about that theer young chap," Janner remarked with the slowness of a man who was rather mystified by the fascination under whose influence he found himself — "summat as goes wi' th' grain loike."

"Ay," answered his wife, "so theer is; an' its

natur' too. Coom along in, lad," to Seth, "an' ha' summat to eat: you look faintish."

Black Creek found him a wonderfully quiet member of society, the lad Seth. He came and went to and from the mine with mechanical regularity, working with the rest, taking his meals with the Janners, and sleeping in a small shanty left vacant by the desertion of a young miner who had found life at the settlement too monotonous to suit his tastes. No new knowledge of his antecedents was arrived at. He had come "fro' Deepton," and that was the beginning and end of the matter. In fact, his seemed to be a peculiarly silent nature. He was fond of being alone, and spent most of his spare time in the desolate little shanty. Attempts at conversation appeared to trouble him, it was discovered, and accordingly he was left to himself as not worth the cultivating.

"Why does na' tha' talk more?" demanded Janner's daughter, who was a strong, brusque young woman, with a sharp tongue.

"I ha' not gotten nowt to say," was the meekly deprecating response.

Miss Janner, regarding the humble face with some impatience, remarkably enough, found nothing to deride in it, though, being neither a beauty nor in her first bloom, and sharp of tongue, as I have said, she was somewhat given to derision as a rule. In truth, the uncomplaining patience in the dull, soft eyes made her feel a little uncomfortable.

"I dunnot know what ails thee," she remarked with unceremonious candor, "but theer's summat as does."

"It's nowt as can be cured," said the lad, and turned his quiet face away.

In his silent fashion he evinced a certain degree of partially for his host's daughter. Occasionally, after his meals, he lingered for a few moments watching her at her work when she was alone, sitting by the fire or near the door, and regarding her business-like movements with a wistful air of wonder and admiration. And yet so unobtrusive were these mute attentions that Bess Janner was never roused to any form of resentment of them.

"Tha's goin' to ha' a sweetheart at last, my lass," was one of Janner's favorite witticisms, but Bess bore it with characteristic coolness. "I'm noan as big a foo' as I look," she would say, "an' I dunnot moind *him* no more nor if he wus a wench hissen'."

Small as was the element of female society at Black Creek, this young woman was scarcely popular. She was neither fair nor fond: a predominance of muscle and a certain rough deftness of hand were her chief charms. Ordinary sentiment would have been thrown away upon her; and, fortunately, she was spared it.

"She's noan hurt wi' good looks, our Bess," her father remarked with graceful chivalrousness on more than one occasion, "but hoo con heave a'most as much as I con, an' that's summat."

Consequently, it did not seem likely that the feeling she had evidently awakened in the breast of their lodger was akin to the tender passion.

"Am I in yo're way?" he would ask apologetically; and the answer was invariably a gracious if curt one: "No — no more than th' cat. Stay wheer yo' are, lad, an' make yo'resen' comfortable."

There came a change, however, in the nature of their intercourse, but this did not occur until the lad had been with them some three months. For several days he had been ailing and unlike himself. He had been even more silent than usual; he had eaten little, and lagged on his way to and from his work; he looked thinner, and his step was slow and uncertain. There was so great an alteration in him, in fact, that Bess softened toward him visibly. She secretly bestowed the best morsels upon him, and even went so far as to attempt conversation. "Let yo're work go a bit," she advised: "yo're noan fit fur it."

But he did not give up until the third week of illness, and then one warm day at noon, Bess, at work in her kitchen among dishes and pans, was startled from her labors by his appearing at the door and staggering toward her. "What's up wi' yo'?" she demanded. "Yo' look loike death."

"I dunnot know," he faltered, and then, staggering again, caught at her dress with feeble hands. "Dunnot yo'," he whispered, sinking forward — "dunnot yo' let no one — come anigh me."

She flung a strong arm around him, and saved him from a heavy fall. His head dropped helplessly against her breast.

"He's fainted dead away," she said: "he mun ha' been worse than he thowt fur."

She laid him down, and, loosening his clothes at the throat, went for water; but a few minutes after she had bent over him for the second time an exclamation, which was almost a cry, broke from her. "Lord ha' mercy!" she said, and fell back, losing something of color herself.

She had scarcely recovered herself even when, after prolonged efforts, she succeeded in restoring animation to the prostrate figure under her hands. The heavy eyes opening met hers in piteous appeal and protest.

"I — thowt it wur death comn," said the lad. "I wur hopin' as it wur death."

"What ha' yo' done as yo' need wish that?" said Bess; and then, her voice shaking with excitement which got the better of her and forced her to reveal herself, she added, "I've f'un' out that as yo've been hidin'."

Abrupt and unprefaced as her speech was, it scarcely produced the effect she had expected it would. Her charge neither flinched nor reddened. He laid a weak, rough hand upon her dress with a feebly pleading touch. "Dunnot yo' turn agen me," he whispered: "yo' wouldna if yo' knew."

"But I dunnot know," Bess answered, a trifle doggedly, despite her inward relentings.

"I comn to yo'," persisted the lad, "because I thowt yo' wouldna turn agen me: yo' wouldna," patiently again, "if yo' knew."

Gradually the ponderous witticism in which Janner had indulged became an accepted joke in the settlement. Bess had fallen a victim to the tender sentiment at last. She had found an adorer, and had apparently succumbed to his importunities. Seth spent less time in his shanty and more in her society. He lingered in her vicinity on all possible occasions, and seemed to derive comfort from her mere presence. And Bess not only tolerated but encouraged him. Not that her manner was in the least degree effusive: she rather extended a rough protection to her admirer, and displayed a tendency to fight his battles and employ her sharper wit as a weapon in his behalf.

"Yo' may get th' best o' him," she said dryly once to the wit of the Creek, who had been jocular at his expense, "but yo' conna get the best o' me. Try me a bit, lad. I'm better worth yo're mettle."

"What's takken yo', lass?" said her mother at another time. "Yo're that theer soft about th' chap as theer's no makkin' yo' out. Yo' wur nivver loike to be soft afore," somewhat testily. "An' it's noan his good looks, neyther."

"No," said Bess — "it's noan his good looks."

"Happen it's his lack on 'em, then?"

"Happen it is." And there the discussion ended for want of material.

There was one person, however, who did not join in the jesting; and this was Langley. When he began to understand the matter he regarded the two with sympathetic curiosity and interest. Why should not their primitive and uncouth love develop and form a tie to bind the homely lives together, and warm and brighten them? It may have been that his own mental condition at this time was such as would tend to often his heart, for an innocent passion, long cherished in its bud, had burst into its full blooming during the months he had spent amid the novel beauty and loneliness, and perhaps his new bliss subdued him somewhat. Always ready with a kindly word, he was specially ready with it where Seth was concerned. He never passed him without one, and frequently reined in his horse to speak to him at greater length. Now and then, on his way home at night, he stopped at the shanty's door, and summoning the lad detained him for a few minutes chatting in the odorous evening air. It was thoroughly in accordance with the impulses of his frank and generous nature that he should endeavor to win upon him and gain his confidence. "We are both Deepton men," he would say, "and it is natural that we should be friends. We are both alone and a long way from home."

But the lad was always timid and slow of speech.

His gratitude showed itself in ways enough, but it rarely took the form of words. Only, one night as the horse moved away, he laid his hand upon the bridle and held it a moment, some powerful emotion showing itself in his face, and lowering his voice until it was almost a whisper. "Mester," he said, "if theer's ivver owt to be done as is hard an' loike to bring pain an' danger, yo'll — yo'll not forget me?"

Langley looked down at him with a mingled feeling of warm pity and deep bewilderment. "Forget you?" he echoed.

The dullness seemed to have dropped away from the commonplace face as if it had been a veil; the eyes were burning with a hungry pathos and fire and passion; they were raised to his and held him with the power of an indescribable anguish. "Dunnot forget as I'm here," the voice growing sharp and intense, "ready an' eager an' waitin' fur th' toime to come. Let me do summat or brave summat or suffer summat, for God's sake!"

When the young man rode away it was with a sense of weight and pain upon him. He was mystified. People were often grateful to him, but their gratitude was not such as this; this oppressed and disturbed him. It was suggestive of a mental condition whose existence seemed almost impossible. What a life this poor fellow must have led, since the simplest kindliness aroused within him such emotions as this! "It is hard to understand," he

murmured; "it is even a little horrible. One fancies these duller natures do not reach our heights and depths of happiness and pain, and yet —— Cathie, Cathie, my dear," breaking off suddenly and turning his face upward to the broad free blue of the sky as he quickened his horse's pace, "let me think of *you;* this hurts me."

But he was drawn nearer to the boy, and did his best to cheer and help him. His interest in him grew as he saw him oftener, and there was not only the old interest, but a new one. Something in the lad's face — a something which had struck him as familiar even at first — began to haunt him constantly. He could not rid himself of the impression it left upon him, and yet he never found himself a shade nearer a solution of the mystery.

"Raynor," he said to him on one of the evenings when he had stopped before the shanty, "I wish I knew why your face troubles me so."

"Does it trouble yo', mester?"

"Yes," with a half laugh, "I think I may say it troubles me. I have tried to recollect every lad in Deepton, and I have no remembrance of you."

"Happen not, mester," meekly. "I nivver wur much noticed, yo' see: I'm one o' them as foak is more loike to pass by."

An early train arriving next morning brought visitors to the Creek — a business-like elderly gentleman and his daughter, a pretty girl, with large bright eyes and an innocent rosy face, which be-

came rosier and prettier than ever when Mr. Edward Langley advanced from the dépôt shed with uncovered head and extended hand. "Cathie!" he said, when the first greetings had been interchanged, "what a delight this is to me! I did not hope for such happiness as this."

"Father wanted to see the mines," answered Cathie, sweetly demure, "and I — I wanted to see Black Creek; your letters were so enthusiastic."

"A day will suffice, I suppose?" her paternal parent was wandering on amiably. "A man should always investigate such matters for himself. I can see enough to satisfy me between now and the time for the return train."

"I cannot," whispered Langley to Cathie: "a century would not suffice. If the sun would but stand still!"

The lad Seth was late for dinner that day, and when he entered the house Bess turned from her dish-washing to give him a sharp, troubled look. "Art tha' ill again?" she asked.

"Nay," he answered, "nobbit a bit tired an' heavy-loike."

He sat down upon the door-step with wearily-clasped hands, and eyes wandering toward the mountain, whose pine-crowned summit towered above him. He had not even yet outlived the awe of its majesty, but he had learned to love it and draw comfort from its beauty and strength.

"Does tha' want thy dinner?" asked Bess.

"No, thank yo'," he said; "I couldna eat."

The dish-washing was deserted incontinently, and Bess came to the door, towel in hand, her expression at once softened and shaded with discontent. "Summat's hurt yo'," she said. "What is it? Summat's hurt yo' sore."

The labor-roughened hands moved with their old nervous habit, and the answer came in an odd, jerky, half-connected way: "I dunnot know why it should ha' done. I mun be mad, or summat. I nivver had no hope nor nothin': theer nivver wur no reason why I should ha' had. Ay, I mun be wrong somehow, or it wouldna stick to me i' this road. I conna get rid on it, an' I conna feel as if I want to. What's up wi' me? What's takken howd on me?" his voice breaking and the words ending in a sharp hysterical gasp like a sob.

Bess wrung her towel with a desperate strength which spoke of no small degree of tempestuous feeling. Her brow knit itself and her lips were compressed. "What's happened?" she demanded after a pause. "I conna mak' thee out."

The look that fell upon her companion's face had something of shame in it. His eyes left the mountain side and drooped upon his clasped hands. "Theer wur a lass coom to look at 'th place today," he said — "a lady lass, wi' her feyther — an' him. She wur aw rosy red an' fair white, an' it seemt as if she wur that happy as her laughin' made th' birds mock back at her. He took her up th'

mountain, an' we heard 'em both even high up among th' laurels. Th' sound o' their joy a-floatin' down from the height, so nigh th' blue sky, made me sick an' weak-loike. They wur na so gay when they comn bock, but her eyes wur shinin', an' so wur his, an' I heerd him say to her as 'Foak didna know how nigh heaven th' top o' th' mountain wur.'"

Bess wrung her towel again, and regarded the mountain with manifest impatience and trouble. "Happen it'll coom reet some day," she said.

"Reet!" repeated the lad, as if mechanically. "I hadna towd mysen' as owt wur exactly wrong; on'y I conna see things clear. I nivver could, an' th' more I ax mysen' questions th' worse it gets. Wheer — wheer could I lay th' blame?"

"Th' blame!" said Bess. "Coom tha' an' get a bite to eat;" and she shook out the towel with a snap and turned away. "Coom tha," she repeated; "I mun get my work done."

That night, as Seth lay upon his pallet in the shanty, the sound of Langley's horse's hoofs reached him with an accompaniment of a clear, young masculine voice singing a verse of some sentimental modern carol — a tender song ephemeral and sweet. As the sounds neared the cabin the lad sprang up restlessly, and so was standing at the open door when the singer passed. "Good-neet, mester," he said.

The singer slackened his pace and turned his

bright face toward him in the moonlight, waving his hand. "Good-night," he said, "and pleasant dreams! Mine will be pleasant ones, I know. This has been a happy day for me, Raynor. Good-night."

When the two met again the brighter face had sadly changed; its beauty was marred with pain, and the shadow of death lay upon it.

Entering Janner's shanty the following morning, Seth found the family sitting around the breakfast-table in ominous silence. The meal stood untouched, and even Bess looked pale and anxious. All three glanced toward him questioningly as he approached, and when he sat down Janner spoke: "Hasna tha' heerd th' news?" he asked.

"Nay," Seth answered, "I ha' heerd nowt."

Bess interposed hurriedly: "Dunnot yo' fear him, feyther," she said. "Happen it isna so bad, after aw. Four or five foak wur takken down ill last neet, Seth, an' the young mester wur among 'em; an' theer's them as says it's cholera."

It seemed as if he had not caught the full meaning of her words; he only stared at her in a startled, bewildered fashion. "Cholera!" he repeated dully.

"Theer's them as knows it's cholera," said Janner, with gloomy significance. "An' if it's cholera, it's death;" and he let his hand fall heavily upon the table.

"Ay," put in Mrs. Janner in a fretful wail, "fur

they say as it's worse i' these parts than it is i' England — th' heat mak's it worse — an' here we are i' th' midst o' th' summer-toime, an' theer's no knowin' wheer it'll end. I wish tha'd takken my advice, Janner, an' stayed i' Lancashire. Ay, I wish we wur safe at home. Better less wage an' more safety. Yo'd nivver ha' coom if yo'd listened to me."

"Howd thy tongue, mother," said Bess, but the words were not ungently spoken, notwithstanding their bluntness. "Dunnot let us mak' it worse than it need be. Seth, lad, eat thy breakfast."

But there was little breakfast eaten. The fact was, that at the first spreading of the report a panic had seized upon the settlement, and Janner and his wife were by no means the least influenced by it. A stolidly stubborn courage upheld Bess, but even she was subdued and somewhat awed.

"I nivver heerd much about th' cholera," Seth said to her after breakfast. "Is this here true, this as thy feyther says?"

"I dunnot know fur sure," Bess answered gravely, "but it's bad enow."

"Coom out wi' me into th' fresh air," said the lad, laying his hand upon her sleeve: "I mun say a word or so to thee." And they went out together.

There was no work done in the mine that day. Two or three new cases broke out, and the terror spread itself and grew stronger. In fact, Black

Creek scarcely comported itself as stoically as might have been expected. A messenger was dispatched to the nearest town for a doctor, and his arrival by the night train was awaited with excited impatience.

When he came, however, the matter became worse. He had bad news to tell himself. The epidemic had broken out in the town he had left, and great fears were entertained by its inhabitants. "If you had not been so entirely thrown on your own resources," he said, "I could not have come."

A heavy enough responsibility rested upon his shoulders during the next few weeks. He had little help from the settlement. Those who were unstricken looked on at the progress of the disease with helpless fear: few indeed escaped a slight attack, and those who did were scarcely more useful than his patients. In the whole place he found only two reliable and unterrified assistants.

His first visit was to a small farm-house round the foot of the mountain and a short distance from the mine. There he found the family huddled in a back room like a flock of frightened sheep, and in the only chamber a handsome, bright-haired young fellow lying upon the bed with a pinched and ominous look upon his comely face. The only person with him was a lad roughly clad in miner's clothes — a lad who stood by chafing his hands, and who turned desperate eyes to the door when it opened. "Yo're too late, mester," he said — "yo're too late."

But young as he was — and he was a very young man — the doctor had presence of mind and energy, and he flung his whole soul and strength into the case. The beauty and solitariness of his patient roused his sympathy almost as if it had been the beauty of a woman; he felt drawn toward the stalwart, helpless young figure lying upon the humble couch in such apparent utter loneliness. He did not count much upon the lad at first — he seemed too much bewildered and shaken — but it was not long before he changed his mind. "You are getting over your fear," he said.

"It wasna fear, mester," was the answer he received; "or at least it wasna fear for mysen'."

"What is your name?"

"Seth Raynor, mester. Him an' me," with a gesture toward the bed, "comn from th' same place. Th' cholera couldna fear me fro' *him* — nor nowt else if he wur i' need."

So it was Seth Raynor who watched by the bedside, and labored with loving care and a patience which knew no weariness, until the worst was over and Langley was among the convalescent.

"The poor fellow and Bess Janner were my only stay," the young doctor was wont to say. "Only such care as his would have saved you, and you had a close race of it as it was."

During the convalescence nurse and invalid were drawn together with a stronger tie through every hour. Wearied and weak, Langley's old interest

in the lad became a warm affection. He could scarcely bear to lose sight of the awkward boyish figure, and never rested so completely as when it was by his bedside.

"Give me your hand, dear fellow," he would say, "and let me hold it. I shall sleep better for knowing you are near me."

He fell asleep thus one morning, and awakened suddenly to a consciousness of some new presence in the room. Seth no longer sat in the chair near his pillow, but stood a little apart; and surely he would have been no lover if the feeble blood had not leaped in his veins at the sight of the face bending over him — the innocent, fair young face which had so haunted his pained and troubled dreams. "Cathie!" he cried out aloud.

The girl fell upon her knees and caught his extended hand with a passionate little gesture of love and pity. "I did not know," she poured forth in hurried, broken tones. "I have been away ever since the sickness broke out at home. They sent me away, and I only heard yesterday — Father, tell him, for I cannot."

He scarcely heard the more definite explanation, he was at once so happy and so fearful.

"Sweetheart," he said, "I can scarcely bear to think of what may come of this; and yet how blessed it is to have you near me again! The danger for me is all over: even your dear self could not have cared for me more faithfully than I have been cared for. Raynor there has saved my life."

But Cathie could only answer with a piteous, remorseful jealousy: "Why was it not I who saved it? why was it not I?"

And the place where Seth had stood waiting was vacant, for he had left it at the sound of Langley's first joyous cry. When he returned an hour or so later, the more restful look Langley had fancied he had seen on his face of late had faded out: the old unawakened heaviness had returned. He was nervous and ill at ease, shrinking and conscious.

"I've comn to say good-neet to yo'," he said hesitatingly to the invalid. "Th' young lady says as she an' her feyther will tak' my place a bit. I'll coom i' th' mornin'."

"You want rest," said Langley; "you are tired, poor fellow!"

"Ay," quietly, "I'm tired; an' the worst is over, yo' see, an' she's here," with a patient smile. "Yo' wunnot need me, and theer's them as does."

From that hour his work at this one place seemed done. For several days he made his appearance regularly to see if he was needed, and then his visits gradually ended. He had found a fresh field of labor among the sufferers in the settlement itself. He was as faithful to them as he had been to his first charge. The same unflagging patience showed itself, the same silent constancy and self-sacrifice. Scarcely a man or woman had not some cause to remember him with gratitude, and there was not

one of those who had jested at and neglected him but thought of their jests and neglect with secret shame.

There came a day, however, when they missed him from among them. If he was not at one house he was surely at another, it appeared for some time; but when, after making his round of visits, the doctor did not find him, he became anxious. He might be at Janner's; but he was not there, nor among the miners, who had gradually resumed their work as the epidemic weakened its strength and their spirits lightened. Making these discoveries at nightfall, the doctor touched up his horse in some secret dread. He had learned earlier than the rest to feel warmly toward this simple co-laborer. "Perhaps he's gone out to pay Langley a visit," he said: "I'll call and see. He may have stopped to have a rest."

But before he had passed the last group of cabins he met Langley himself, who by this time was well enough to resume his place in the small world, and, hearing his story, Langley's anxiety was greater than his own. "I saw him last night on my way home," he said. "About this time, too, for I remember he was sitting in the moonlight at the door of his shanty. We exchanged a few words, as we always do, and he said he was there because he was not needed, and thought a quiet night would do him good. Is it possible no one has seen him since?" in sudden alarm.

"Come with me," said his companion.

Overwhelmed by a mutual dread, neither spoke until they reached the shanty itself. There was no sign of human life about it: the door stood open, and the only sound to be heard was the rustle of the wind whispering among the pines upon the mountain side. Both men flung themselves from their horses with loudly-beating hearts.

"God grant he is not here!" uttered Langley. "God grant he is anywhere else! The place is so drearily desolate."

Desolate indeed! The moonbeams streaming through the door threw their fair light upon the rough boards and upon the walls, and upon the quiet figure lying on the pallet in one of the corners, touching with pitying whiteness the homely face upon the pillow and the hand that rested motionless upon the floor.

The doctor went down on his knees at the pallet's side, and thrust his hand into the breast of the coarse garments with a half-checked groan.

"Asleep?" broke from Langley's white lips in a desperate whisper. "Not — not" —

"Dead!" said the doctor — "dead for hours!" There was actual anguish in his voice as he uttered the words, but another element predominated in the exclamation which burst from him scarcely a second later. "Good God!" he cried — "good God!"

Langley bent down and caught him almost

fiercely by the arm: the exclamation jarred upon him. "What is it?" he demanded, "What do you mean?"

"It is — a woman!"

Even as they gazed at each other in speechless questioning the silence was broken in upon. Swift, heavy footsteps neared the door, crossed the threshold, and Janner's daughter stood before them.

There was no need for questioning. One glance told her all. She made her way to the moonlit corner, pushed both aside with rough strength, and knelt down. "I might ha' knowed," she said with helpless bitterness — "I might ha' knowed;" and she laid her face against the dead hand in a sudden passion of weeping. "I might ha' knowed, Jinny lass," she cried, but I didna. It was loike aw th' rest as tha' should lay thee down an' die loike this. Tha' wast alone aw along, an' tha' wast alone at th' last. But dunnot blame me, poor lass. Nay, I know tha' wiltna."

The two men stood apart, stirred by an emotion too deep for any spoken attempt at sympathy. She scarcely seemed to see them: she seemed to recognize no presence but that of the unresponsive figure upon its lowly couch. She spoke to it as if it had been a living thing, her voice broken and tender, stroking the hair now and then with a touch all womanly and loving. "Yo' were nigher to me than most foak, Jinny," she said; "an' tha' trusted me, I know."

They left her to her grief until at last she grew calmer and her sobs died away into silence. Then she rose and approaching Langley, who stood at the door, spoke to him, scarcely raising her tear-stained eyes. "I ha' summat to tell yo', an' summat to ax yo'," she said, "an' I mun tell it to yo' alone. Will yo' coom out here?"

He followed her, wondering and sad. His heart was heavy with the pain and mystery the narrow walls inclosed. When they paused a few yards from the house, the one face was scarcely more full of sorrow than the other, only that the woman's was wet with tears. She was not given to many words, Bess Janner, and she wasted few in the story she had to tell. "Yo' know th' secret as she carried," she said, "or I wouldna tell yo' even now; an' now I tell it yo' that she may carry the secret to her grave, an' ha' no gossiping tongue to threep at her. I dunnot want foak starin' an' wonderin' an' makkin' talk. She's borne enow."

"It shall be as you wish, whether you tell me the story or not," said Langley. "We will keep it as sacred as you have done."

She hesitated a moment, seemingly pondering with herself before she answered him. "Ay," she said, "but I ha' another reason behind. I want summat fro' yo': I want yo're pity. Happen it moight do her good even now." She did not look at him as she proceeded, but stood with her face a little turned away and her eyes resting upon the

shadow on the mountain. "Theer wur a lass as worked at the Deepton mines," she said — "a lass as had a weakly brother as worked an' lodged wi' her. Her name wur Jinny, an' she wur quiet and plain-favored. Theer wur other wenches as wur weel-lookin', but she wasna; theer wur others as had homes, and she hadna one; theer wur plenty as had wit an' sharpness, but she hadna them neyther. She wur nowt but a desolate, homely lass, as seemt to ha' no place i' th' world, an' yet wur tender and weak-hearted to th' core. She wur allus longin' fur summat as she wur na loike to get; an' she nivver did get it, fur her brother wasna one as cared fur owt but his own doin's. But theer were one among aw th' rest as nivver passed her by, an' he wur the mester's son. He wur a bright, handsome chap, as won his way ivverywheer, an' had a koind word or a laugh fur aw. So he gave th' lass a smile, an' did her a favor now and then — loike as not without givin' it more than a thowt — until she learned to live on th' hope o' seein' him. An', bein' weak an' tender, it grew on her fro' day to day, until it seemt to give th' strength to her an' tak' it both i' one."

She stopped and looked at Langley here. "Does tha' see owt now, as I'm gotten this fur?" she asked.

"Yes," he answered, his agitation almost mastering him. "And now I have found the lost face that haunted me so."

"Ay," said Bess, "it was hers;" and she hurried on huskily: "When you went away she couldna abide the lonesomeness, an' so one day she said to her brother, 'Dave, let us go to th' new mine wheer M ster Ed'ard is;' an' him bein' allus ready fur a move, they started out together. But on th' way th' lad took sick and died sudden, an' Jinny wur left to hersen'. An' then she seed new trouble. She wur beset wi' danger as she'd nivver thowt on, an' before long she foun' out as women didna work o' this side o' the sea as they did o' ours. So at last she wur driv' upon a strange-loike plan. It sounds wild, happen, but it wasna so wild after aw. Her bits of clothes giv' out an' she had no money; an' theer wur Dave's things. She'd wore the loike at her work i' Deepton, an' she made up her moind to wear 'em agen. Yo' didna know her when she coom here, an' no one else guessed at th' truth. She didna expect nowt, yo' see; she on'y wanted th' comfort o' hearin' th' voice she'd longed an' hungered fur; an' here wur wheer she could hear it. When I foun' her out by accident, she towd me, an' sin' then we 've kept th' secret together. Do you guess what else theer's been betwixt us, mester?"

"I think I do," he answered. "God forgive me for my share in her pain!"

"Nay," she returned, "it was no fault o' thine. She nivver had a thowt o' that. She had a patient

way wi' her, had Jinny, an' she bore her trouble better than them as hopes. She didna ax nor hope neyther; an' when theer coom fresh hurt to her she wur ready an' waitin', knowin' as it moight comn ony day. Happen th' Lord knows what life wur give her fur — I dunnot, but it's ower now — an' happen she knows hersen'. I hurried here to-neet," she added, battling with a sob, "as soon as I heerd as she was missin'. Th' truth struck to my heart, an' I thought as I should be here first, but I wasna. I ha' not gotten no more to say."

They went back to the shanty, and with her own hands she did for the poor clay the last service it would need, Langley and his companion waiting the while outside. When her task was at an end she came to them, and this time it was Langley who addressed himself to her. "May I go in?" he asked.

She bent her head in assent, and without speaking he left them and entered the shanty alone. The moonlight, streaming in as before, fell upon the closed eyes, and hands folded in the old, old fashion upon the fustian jacket: the low whisper of the pines crept downward like a sigh. Kneeling beside the pallet, the young man bent his head and touched the pale forehead with reverent lips. "God bless you for your love and faith," he said, "and give you rest!"

And when he rose a few minutes later, and

saw that the little dead flower he had worn had dropped from its place and lay upon the pulseless breast, he did not move it, but turned away and left it resting there.

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